

way,” but I keep repeating the same old habits, thinking that “it’s not the right time” and that I lack the strength. I relax, and I soothe the other people who are also relaxing. Therefore even Pascha the Beautiful will not fill us to the brim with eternal life if we have not succeeded in using the fast to cleanse ourselves on the inside. The Lord will not pour “new wine into old wineskins” for us. It is we who are to blame, not the Lord—for we have sat comfortably behind the fence for a variety of reasons. This is not good. This is not pretty. This is not honest. The planets dance around the Sun. Our Sun is Christ. “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings,” says the Prophet Malachi (4:2). Thus in the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts* we touch the Lamb with fear and we ring the bell so that people would fall to their knees; we make prostrations; we sing many hymns of repentance and praise. And the heavenly powers serve the King of Glory with us invisibly. As a result this gives us such a prayerful feeling and disposition, such a thirst to appear before Christ, that it should be enough to last for a long time. Lent will pass, but the reverential attitude will remain. After Pascha other feast days will follow, and the desire to pray with tears, to make prostrations, and to fast will not leave our souls. Therefore we need to breathe deeply of the sorrowful but healthful air of Great Lent, so that the chastity and austerity in this air will sink deeply into every cell of our spiritual organism. —*adapted*

• ANNUNCIATION, March 25:

The scriptural background of Annunciation (*good tidings*) is found in the Gospel of St. Luke (1:26-38). We sing: “Today is the fountainhead of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity. The Son of God becometh the Virgin’s Son.” You will have the opportunity to honor the Mother of God at Vigil for the Feast on Saturday evening, March 24 at 5 PM—certainly we all celebrate this feast with as much enthusiasm as we do Christmas or Pascha.

• MEMORY ETERNAL:

Yolanda Lofitzki, longtime member of our parish, fell-asleep-in-the-Lord on Friday, March 16. Funeral plans are being made now, and will be posted on our website. May the Lord give her rest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 18, 2012 ~ Veneration of the Cross

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, March 17: 9 AM, Work Party
3:30 PM, Catechism, *On the Creed, Part Two*
5 PM, VIGIL FOR THE CROSS with the bringing out of the Cross at the end of Matins
- Sunday, March 18: 9–10 AM, Confessions
10 AM, Divine Liturgy / 11:45, Church School
Noon, Agape luncheon in Hall
- Tues., March 20: 7:30 AM, Matins
- Wed., March 21: 7:30 AM, Matins
5 PM, Confessions / 6:15 PM, Presanctified
- Thurs., March 22: 7:30 AM, Matins (*Fr. L in Calistoga all day*)
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Friday, March 23: 7:30 AM, Matins
6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy
- CONFESSION:
During Great Lent, we intensify our spiritual work, fasting, works of mercy, prayers at home, prayers in Church, and we make an effort to keep a watch on our mind, heart and words. We want to cleanse our souls and bodies, our minds and passions. This is the work of repentance, which is renewal and knowledge of ourselves. So, yes, of course we are going to make a Confession during Lent, maybe numerous times, as we struggle to cleanse the image of God in us. Don’t delay. **PLEASE NOTE:** For those over the age of seven who wish to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week and Pascha, it is a holy obligation to make a confession at least once in the three

weeks before Holy Week. And so we prepare for Pascha.

- PLEASE PLAN AHEAD:

No Confessions will be heard after Holy Wednesday. *Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of repentance*—Holy Week is the time of the Lord’s passion and many Services, and there is no time for confession.

- CHOIR REHEARSAL:

Note to all Choir members—our **25th Annual Fifth-Saturday-of-Lent Rehearsal** will be on Saturday, March 31 from 10:30 AM–2:30 PM, lunch included. This rehearsal is mandatory.

- PARISH RETREAT on the Fifth Thursday of Lent, March 29:

On Thursday, March 29 we will have Matins of the 5th Thursday of Great Lent, in which we sing all 250 verses of the Great Canon (a nine-ode hymn) of St. Andrew of Crete. This hymn is a meditation in prayer through the Bible, teaching us the meaning of man’s sin, his repentance and how the Lord constantly seeks and loves His creation. In the midst of this great poem we will also read the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt. Matins starts at 9 AM and runs until about noon. At that point we begin the *Liturgy of the Presanctified*. The entire process will be over about 1:30 or 2 PM. Before receiving Holy Communion we normally fast strictly for about six hours.

- BEING IN CHRIST:

Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna (Northern California monastery) writes: “I should emphasize that the therapeutic path towards the restoration of personhood in Christ is, and must be, focused, of course, on the life of the Mysteries [Sacraments], which are the very life of the Church and which cannot be separated from the Church in any manner whatsoever: among other things, the emptying-out (*kenosis*) of sin through confession and the infusion into our hearts, joints, and reins [*sic*] of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The spiritual faculty of man, the *noetic* faculty, having been displaced from its natural place in the heart, as St. Gregory Palamas teaches us, must be brought back into the heart, back to its natural place, so that the human person can be restored and, cleansed by the Mysteries, rise above his own nature, attaining what is

above nature, transcending human nature through union with Christ. As a result of this, the human being transcends even his own person, his restoration in Christ touching on all mankind. Gaining the gifts of the Spirit, he sees all things clearly, not only for himself, as St. Gregory writes, but revealing what he sees to others, and thus helping them to gain their salvation through the vision of God. In this sense, Christ is not only our personal Lord and Savior, but He is also the Universal Person, Who renews us each individually and, so made manifest in us, reveals to us a far greater dimension of personal salvation than we can imagine.” —*from Orthodox Tradition, Vol. XVII, 2000*

- ON THE CROSS:

You should continually keep in mind the great humiliation which the Lord took upon Himself in His ineffable love for us: how the divine Logos dwelt in a womb; how He took human nature upon Himself; His birth from a woman; His gradual bodily growth; the shame He suffered, the insults the vilification, ridicule and abuse; how He was scourged and spat upon, derided and mocked; the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns; His condemnation by those in power; the outcry of the unruly Jews, men of His own race, against Him: “Away with him, away with him, crucify him” (Jn. 19:15); the cross, the nails, the lance, the drink of vinegar and gall; the scorn of the Gentiles; the derision of the passers-by who said: “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and we will believe you” (cf. Mt. 27:39-42); and the rest of the sufferings which He patiently accepted for us: crucifixion; death; the three-day burial; the descent into hades. Then keep in mind all that has come from these sufferings. See to what a height of glory the Lord’s human nature was raised up by God’s justice through these sufferings and humiliations? —*St. Mark the Ascetic*

- LENT WILL END, and then what?:

Great Lent flies by quickly. And having flown by, it often leaves behind a residue of dissatisfaction. People say: the fast has gone by again, and I did not manage either to labor or to change myself. Pascha is drawing near, but I feel as if I have wasted the entire Forty Day Fast; I feel sorry for myself for only having half-fasted. I seem to know that “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence” and that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the