

the human penchant and perversion for revenge. The *little infants* which were left alive in wars would grow up to take revenge on and destroy the warrior who was so careless (just as our unchecked *logismi* can grow into passions which destroy *our* unseen warfare). We are not as removed from that brutal idea as we think. The basic plot of the movie **Godfather II** is that little Vito Corleone is the infant (small child in this case), whom the Sicilian Mafia boss wants to kill (having just killed the rest of Vito's family). The boss was aware that if Vito were left alive, it could be bad for him later in life. The Great Fast offers an invitation and the tools for us to change, to reorient our lives, thoughts, words, deeds and goals toward the Kingdom and Christ's life. The intrusive "little infant thoughts" —seemingly so harmless—that lead us to distraction, despair, confusion and sin, are thereby overcome. We empower the soul by prayer to the Almighty God to put the stranglehold on our unruly desires, self-pity, and self-justification. By God's grace then, the soul alone controls who can operate in the neighborhood of our heart, and infusing our life with grace until it makes us an "offer we can't refuse!" (*borrowed from a forgotten source*).

Blini Brunch

Complete with sour cream, lox, herring, and caviar...and of course, butter, syrup and bacon!!

Church Hall
Sunday, February 15, Noon

Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that wonderful time of Lent.

Prices for the Blini Brunch will be a la carte. Wine, juice, coffee and tea will be available for a small additional charge.

Children's plates are available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

February 8, 2015 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Two:
When Thou didst descend to death, O Life-Immortal, Thou didst slay hades with the splendor of Thy Godhead; and when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to Thee.
- TROPARION OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD, Tone One:
Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, also thou righteous Elder, as thou receivest in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, who also granteth unto us the Resurrection
- KONTAKION OF THE PRODIGAL SON:
Foolishly I sprang away from Thy great fatherly glory and dispersed in wicked deeds the riches that Thou didst give me. With the Prodigal I therefore cry unto Thee now: I have sinned against Thee, O compassionate Father. But receive me in repentance; and make me as one of Thy hired servants, O Lord.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Feb. 7: 9 AM, *Women's Retreat with Presvytera Eugenia Constantinou*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Feb. 8: 9 AM, Baptism of Gabrielle Myles
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:45 PM, Church School
Noon, Agape luncheon to follow the Liturgy
- Wed., Feb. 11: 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank
6 PM, Vespers

- Thurs., Feb. 12: Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship (potluck)
7 PM, Master Planning Meeting
- Sat., Feb. 14: 3:30 PM, Catechism
4:30 PM, Panikhida for Soul Saturday
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions

- WELCOME:

We welcome Presvytera Dr. Eugenia Constantinou and thank her for coming to us to lead the women in a retreat.

- SENIOR LUNCH:

Seniors and retired folks: the monthly luncheon is on Thursday, February 12, at Noon.

- MASTER PLANNING SESSION:

Thursday, February 12, at 7 PM, in the Parish Hall. All are invited.

- MEATFARE is February 15:

That is the last day to consume meat products (including chicken and lamb!) until Pascha. The next weekend, February 22, is Cheesefare, or more properly, the “Sunday of Forgiveness” and even more properly—according to the Liturgical books—the day in which we meditate on the “Casting out of Adam and Eve from Paradise.” That is the final day to eat dairy and eggs. Also, perhaps more importantly, the Vespers with the *Rite of Forgiveness* takes place at 1:15 PM. **All parishioners** should make every effort to be present, so we may begin Lent together as a parish.

- CONGRATULATIONS:

Members elected to the Parish Council at the Annual Meeting last week are: Tom Pellizzer, Debbie Buse, Rachel Dovey, Tito Vincente Ramirez and Alexander Stameroff. The Alternates are Dennis Campbell and Kristine Tellefsen. George Staykow and Martin Thong were elected to be auditors, and David Winterton as Treasurer. They join the following four who have another year to serve on their term: Thom Stewart, Serge Anderson, Bonnie Alexander and Amy Ramirez Margitich. The first meeting will be on February 19, at 7 PM.

- FROM THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM—Fr. Alexander Men:

“*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my failings and not condemn my brother.*” You

understand this. The greatest cure from condemnation is the ability to criticize oneself. We are extremely careful—I would say observant and even psychologically sophisticated—when we are considering the sins of our neighbors or the sins of other people. Here we display maximum knowledge of all moral laws in all their subtleties. Here we act like strict judges, although we have no right to do so, since we ourselves are guilty of the very things of which we condemn others. You ask me: perhaps this is appeasement and compromise with evil? Under no circumstances. Never. We must call evil by its name. But we must have compassion for the person who falls into this sin. This is the essence of this prayer read daily with prostrations during Great Lent. *From the lecture “Great Lent,” delivered on April 1, 1989 the year before he was martyred—with an ax—on his way to serve Divine Liturgy.*

- BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON (reprint from 2014):

On the three Sundays prior to Great Lent we sing Psalm 136, which begins with the phrase: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.” This was a psalm sung by the Jewish people who had been taken as captive slaves to Babylon (597–538 BC) after the Temple and city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. It is a lament of exile, enslavement and bitterness, not in Egypt as before, but in Babylon. In scripture, pagan Babylon stands for defeat, loss, sin, humiliation and alienation from God. These themes link us to the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), who is in wretched exile in a “far country” rather than Paradise, a long way from his father’s house. The ancient Jews in Babylon and the Prodigal remind us that there are many things which exile and estrange us from our Loving Father, from “normal life” and from the Kingdom, and so we sing this Psalm from the depths of our sorrow. In its final verse, we hear words which express the utter frustration and devastation of having lost home, family and God, words of violence and outrageous revenge by a people who have been egregiously wronged: *Happy shall he be, that shall take and dash thine infants against the rock. Alleluia.* Of course we recoil in horror at such words. Perhaps those that have forgotten the principles of understanding the Scriptures would like to remove that Psalm from the Bible. They are not aware of how the Rock is Christ (see 1 Cor. 10:4), and the infants are our “intrusive thoughts” (*logismi*) which tempt us into sin. The psalm expresses the brutality of tribal warfare, and