

(Church school children and teachers excepted). It is not polite at anyone's table to rush off after eating—how much more honor we should give to God! And of course, I strongly encourage you to remain for the Prayers after Communion, and certainly not to engage in conversation as they are prayed. My intention with this exhortation is not to make things more strict, it is to help you receive the most benefit, to “stay in the moment” of the Liturgy, and to offer thanks to God for giving you His Body and Blood.

• THE CHURCH AT HOME:

We place icons in every room of the house, especially the entryway, dining room, and bedroom. It is common to have two places of prayer in one's home: one where one prays with family and guests, and a place to pray alone. Always light a candle when you begin to pray. Not only is it an offering to God, and a symbol of the light of Christ, it will also help draw you into prayer.

Please join us for our traditional

Blini Brunch

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

Church Hall

Sunday, February 23, 2014 ~ Noon

We will be honoring this tradition with our family and friends, so make sure to invite them!

Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that wonderful time of Lent. Prices for the Blini Brunch will be à la carte. Wine, juice, coffee and tea will be available for a small additional charge. Children's plates are available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

February 16, 2014 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

• TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone One:

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ; glory to Thy kingdom; glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

• KONTAKION OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Tone 3:

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. 15: 4 PM, *Memorial for Loul Moges*
5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Feb. 16: 9–10 AM, Confessions
9:30 AM, *Akathist Nurturer of Children*
10 AM, Divine Liturgy
11:45 PM, Church School
Noon, Agape luncheon to follow the Liturgy
- Wed., Feb. 19: 3 PM, Catechism, *On the Eucharist*
6 PM, Vespers / Potluck / Scripture Study
- Thurs., Feb. 20: Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship (potluck)
7 PM, Master Planning Meeting
- Sat., Feb. 22: 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy
5 PM, Vigil / Confessions

- SENIOR LUNCH:

Last get-together before Great Lent. Thursday, February 20, at Noon.

- SCRIPTURE STUDY:

All are invited: Wednesday evening Vespers, 6 PM, followed by a potluck dinner, with a talk on the Holy Scriptures. This coming Wednesday, February 19, Fr. Lawrence will speak on the fifteen Old Testament readings of Holy Saturday. The following week, Feb. 26, Fr. John will complete his review of the Five Books of Moses.

- MASTER PLANNING SESSION:

Thursday, February 20, at 7 PM, in the Parish Hall. All are invited to join in the process.

- FORGIVENESS SUNDAY – March 2:

In three weeks we will serve the Vespers of Forgiveness, right after the usual Sunday Agape Meal. The Service, which ushers in the Great Fast of Lent, begins at 1:15 PM. At the conclusion of this Service we will ask forgiveness of each other, each person approaching the priests, then each other. Those who can, do a prostration before the other; those who cannot simply ask forgiveness, and that is enough. Please don't avoid the Vespers because you cannot make a (or many) prostrations. A bow is sufficient. We say to each: "Forgive me;" and each answers back, "Forgive me. God forgives." The important thing is that we, as a parish—all its members—gather to ask forgiveness of one another. —Fr. Lawrence

- BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON:

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 and enslavement, not in Egypt as before, but in Babylon. So, Babylon, in scripture, stands for defeat, loss, sin, humiliation and alienation from God. This week we hear of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), far from his Father, in wretched exile in a "far country" rather than Paradise. Along with the Catechumens who are enrolled to be baptized, we are about to begin the Lenten journey together. We understand that—like the

ancient Jews and the Prodigal—there are many things which exile and estrange us from our Loving Father, 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. We hear words of violent 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 I Cor. 10:4), and the infants are our "intrusive thoughts" (*logismi*) which tempt us into sin just forming up. The psalm expresses the brutality of tribal warfare, and 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. So, here is to the Lenten season of hits on the intrusive "little infant thoughts"—seemingly so harmless—that lead us to distraction, despair, confusion and sin. We empower the soul to put the stranglehold on our unruly desires, self-pity, and self-justification. It alone then 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*).

- A WORD OF INSTRUCTION:

There is a very significant moment, near the end of the Divine Liturgy, after Communion, that many of our parishioners are simply missing. When I lift the Holy Chalice off the Altar, turn to you, the faithful, and say "Blessed is our God, always now and ever and unto ages of ages," and bless you with the Chalice, a great many of you are walking to the Narthex for the bread and wine or are heading out the front door, and therefore your back is toward the Chalice. Instead, all the faithful should be bowing deeply in thanksgiving and reverence. Secondly, if you have received Holy Communion, then you are obligated to remain until the end