

HOLY AND AWESOME SATURDAY

A sermon to help us prepare for Holy Week

ON THIS HOLY, GREAT AND AWESOME Saturday when the human soul of Christ was torn away from His Body, and when His incorruptible, holy Body rested in the tomb, what a deep sense of awe and what horror, what terror filled all creation. ...a sense of awe, because all creation had recognized in Him the Living God, God's Word, the Creator of all things; and what terror, what horror at the sight of His death! Humans in their blindness, prisoners of sin, prisoners of their mortality could continue to live insensitive to what was happening. Pilate went his way, the soldiers continued in their barracks, the multitude dispersed having been present at an awesome, strange event, but an event that remained undeciphered for them; and the High Priest rejoiced, and Judas died. But the whole created world knew more about what had happened than the humans.

On the first great Sabbath, God Who had created all things, rested from His labors, and committed the care and the charge of the world He had made to man, man who belonged to the created world at the very root of it; because he was not made as a fulfillment, as the greatest of all beings in a line of evolution: He was made of the clay, of the dust of the earth; lower he could not go, but at the same time, because he was partaker of the lowest there was, he partook of everything that had been born of this primeval matter which God had called into existence.

At the same time man was possessed of the breath of God, belonged to two worlds, indeed, the world of the created and of the uncreated. And his vocation was to lead all beings into that fullness to which he himself was called; from purity and innocence to the maturity of holiness, to that maturity which Saint Paul describes when he says that all things in the world were made in such a way that God be all in all, that all things created be, as it were, the vesture of God, the Body of God, filled with divinity, partakers of it: man and all the rest partakers of the divine nature.

But then man fell, he betrayed his vocation, he fell away, and the world stood in dismay, lost, without a leader who would lead it to the fulfillment of its calling. It would continue to exist—yes; but it could not become what it was called to be without man; and Paul, perceiving this so deeply said that the whole creation is groaning for the

revelation of the children of God, for the day when man should become man again, as God had wanted, called him to be, made him to be, and when all creatures would find in him a vision of what they were to become and a leader on the way to this becoming, this eternal growth into God.

And then Christ appeared, the Son of God Himself became the son of man, and all things created, from the smallest atom to the greatest galaxy recognized in Him the Creator, but at the same time in the body of the Incarnation, in His flesh, all things recognized themselves fulfilled, brought to perfection, recognized themselves as God longed for them to become. And they saw also that this was possible, because if it was possible in Christ, it was possible for all things to be pervaded with divinity, to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, to become the body of the God Eternal.

And then, on one tragic day, once more humanity betrayed both God and its own vocation, rejected the Living God Who had come to save what He had created, rejected the Son of God become the son of man, and nailed Him to the cross, and killed Him. When Adam betrayed his vocation, deeply was the whole world shaken, but there was hope, there still was hope: God was there. On that day, the whole creation trembled with horror, because not only the real Adam, the true and perfect man was now dead, but God had been defeated in him. Was there any hope? There was no hope ... And we can see that the powers of heaven were shaken, that the sun lost its light, that the earth trembled, darkness came down upon the world because even God had been conquered by human hatred and blindness: Nothing was left, seemingly, but death, disintegration, the end.

What wonder when, from the depths of hades, victory resounded, when the whole creation became aware that the Christ's human soul had descended into hades, into the place where God was not, could not be, into the place which by definition was the place of eternal, irremediable absence; but He had come to it in the glory, the shining, the resplendence of His Godhead, and darkness was banished; the place of radical separation had become a place filled victoriously by the divine presence; hades [*sheol*] was no longer; victory was won by God, but not

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95407
Parish office phone: 707-584-9491
website: www.saintseraphim.com

Our Parish Secretary—Bobbi Griovski—may be reached at the Church office Mon., Tues. and Wed., 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491. Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net. He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Second Priest	318-1559
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
David Winterton, Treasurer	331-9085
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	338-4962
Kira Staykow, Sisterhood President	(415) 279-0353
Shenina, Scrip Manager	321-7417
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106

only by God, because it is the human soul of Christ, the man filled with divinity that has won this victory .

And the body? The body lay in the tomb uncorrupted, because corruption could not touch this Body that was filled with divinity, even when His human soul had been torn away from it. Hope came, shy, yet exulting; the whole creation knew now that victory was won and that all things were possible, all promises would be fulfilled, all longings will be satisfied.

Only the world of man was still unaware of it. And we are today in that same holy and awesome Saturday, when the Son of God, the son of man rested from His labors. All creation knows the victory, all hades has been harrowed; now, it is for us to wait; to wait with all longing, all hope, all desire for the news to reach us, that not only hades was conquered but soul and body were reunited, that Christ the man had risen from the tomb, that all things were fulfilled, that the end had come—the end not as a point in time but as a goal attained: the vision of the perfect man united perfectly for ever with the God-head, whose body stood not only for mankind, but for all the created, material and spiritual world. Let us wait with awe, let us wait with gratitude, let us wait with the tenderness and adoration for the moment when we, on earth, will hear the news: Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life. Amen!

—Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of London, reposed 2003

TO LOVE IS TO REMEMBER

A TALE IS TOLD OF a village that learned one day that the good and wise king would come to visit and greet his subjects. The people of the village felt much honored. Everyone agreed that the king should be treated with the utmost courtesy. The mayor of the village announced that a great feast would be held. Each family was requested to bring a pitcher of their finest wine and pour it into a very large and tall barrel. Finally the feast day arrived. The village was sparkling clean and brightly decorated to celebrate the event. The good and wise king arrived with his entourage of nobles and servants. After formal words were exchanged, the mayor proposed a toast. When the wine was drawn from the barrel, however, it was discovered to be water! The village was dishonored. Everyone was ashamed and embarrassed. Each family had secretly felt that if they brought water instead of wine, their selfishness would not be discovered.

How often we in the church feel that someone else will give. We imagine that our minimal or missing gift will not be discovered. We fail to be good stewards. We do not give honor and courtesy to our good and wise King, the Lord Jesus Christ. The parish has a vital mission—to

change lives and to save lives according to the Gospel. In addition to our efforts to assist the physically suffering, we minister also to the spiritually homeless, the spiritually hungry, the spiritually impoverished and the spiritually naked. We cannot do this without your generous support.

We must not forget Christ's church with its many programs and ministries. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote, "To love is to remember." Let each of us pledge, and pledge generously, so that together we may light the candle that illumines the icon of the Lord that rests within the heart of our community.—© *Stewardship Advocates*

No matter how much we may study, it is not possible to come to know God unless we live according to His commandments, for God is not known by science, but by the Holy Spirit. Many philosophers and learned men came to the belief that God exists, but they did not know God. It is one thing to believe that God exists and another to know Him. If someone has come to know God by the Holy Spirit, his soul will burn with love for God day and night, and his soul cannot be bound to any earthly thing. —St. Silouan the Athonite

Maxims for Christian Living

by Fr. Thomas Hopko (reposed March 18, 2015)

1. Be always with Christ.
2. Pray as you can, not as you want.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer that you do by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times a day.
5. Have a short prayer that you constantly repeat when your mind is not occupied with other things.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation.
8. Keep the Church's fasting rules.
9. Spend some time in silence every day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly.
12. Go to confession and communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings regularly to a trusted person.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person.
19. Be polite with everyone.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all, with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, and then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful in all things.
30. Be cheerfull.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and be attentive.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. When we speak, speak simply, clearly, firmly and directly.
37. Flee imagination, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, mumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
41. Don't seek or expect praise or pity from anyone.
42. We don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God alone.
46. Accept criticism gratefully but test it critically.
47. Give advice to others only when asked or obligated to do so.
48. Do nothing for anyone that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and with others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, not on sin and darkness.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your own faults and sins peacefully, serenely, because you know that God's mercy is greater than your wretchedness.
54. When you fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear and without shame.

Visit the website below to hear Fr. Thomas expand on each of the maxims. There is also a transcript to read:

www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/hopko/lent_the_tithe_of_the_year

HYMNS OF BRIDEGROOM MATINS:

Behold! The Bridegroom comes at midnight, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; and again, unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep, lest you be given up to death, and lest you be shut out of the Kingdom. But rouse yourself, crying: "Holy! Holy! Holy! art Thou, O our God," through the Theotokos, have mercy on us!

Thy Bridal Chamber I see adorned, O my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter, O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul and save me. (*hymns sung at Matins on Holy Monday, Tues. and Wed., 6:30 AM*)

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **OUR PRAYERS** are for the newly-reposed Bill McPherson, husband of our dear Gretchen, to whom we express our love and condolences. May the Lord make Bill's memory to be eternal. Bill will be buried at Pleasant Hill Cemetery.
- **FLOWERS FOR PALM SUNDAY AND PASCHA:** The Sisterhood will be asking—this Sunday, March 29—for your generous contributions towards flowers for Paschal decorations. "O Lord, bless those who love the beauty of Thy House!"
- **PREPARING AND MAKING CONFESSION.** As we intensify our spiritual work of fasting, alms, prayers at home and serving God in Church, we make an effort to keep a watch on our mind, heart and words as we prepare for Pascha. This is the work of repentance—a continual turning of our heart, thoughts, words, deeds and time to our loving Savior. Integral to repentance is Confession. Don't delay in confessing—the Lord stands at the door and knocks. For those over the age of seven who wish to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week and Pascha, it is required to make a confession at least once in the three weeks before Holy Week. No Confessions will be heard after Holy Wednesday. Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of repentance (2 Cor. 6:2)—Holy Week is the time of the Lord's passion and there is no time then for confession. —Fr. Lawrence
- **THE MYSTERY OF HOLY UNCTION** for the sick will be served on Thursday, April 2, at 5 PM. This is a Service reserved for those who are baptized and chrismated in the Orthodox Church (i.e., this is not an anointing with simple holy oil). The Holy Mystery is served for those who are truly ill and in serious need. Those coming should call me as soon as possible to schedule a confession, so that you will be properly prepared before being anointed. —Fr. Lawrence
- **LAZARUS SATURDAY EVENTS:** Following the festal Liturgy for the Feast of the Raising of Lazarus on April 4, there will be a breakfast prepared by those baptized last year. All are invited. In the afternoon, starting about 2 PM or so, we will begin cleaning and decorating the Church in preparation for the Palm Sunday Vigil at 5 PM. Let Father Lawrence know that you are coming to help.
- **SIGN UP SHEETS** in Church. So many opportunities for service: reading the Psalms during Friday night to Saturday morning, reading the Book of Acts on Saturday evening, cleaning during Holy Week and on Pascha morning, candle desk duty, meal set up, , etc....
- **PALM SUNDAY:** Palms are blessed at the Vigil for Palm Sunday—April 5. Palms will be given to you as you enter the Church. During the Prayer for the Blessing of the Palms (after the Gospel), hold your branches high in honor of the Lord, and the priest will walk around the church and sprinkle them with Holy Water. Palm Sunday follows Lazarus Saturday—we are summoned to behold our humble King, the vanquisher of death and the giver of life, Who raised Lazarus from the dead. "With our souls cleansed, and carrying branches, with faith let us sing Christ's praises like the children, crying with a loud voice to the Master: Blessed art Thou, O Savior, who hast come into the world to save Adam from the ancient curse..." (Hymn of the feast)
- **SUNDAY, APRIL 19, THOMAS SUNDAY:** Potluck Agape Meal.
- **BLESSING OF GRAVES** for Radonitsa, Day of Rejoicing: Memorials are not permitted from Holy Week until the week after Pascha, since in Christ there are no dead, and we are encouraged to look beyond the grave. Prayers for the repose resume on the Tuesday after Thomas Sunday, April 21. Graves will be blessed in Forestville (10:30 AM), Healdsburg (11:30 AM) and Santa Rosa (1:30 PM). Graves in Pleasant Hill will be blessed by appointment.



Sonoma Bach's resident vocal consort teams up with the Green Mountain Singers to perform a cappella music in the stunning sanctuary of St. Seraphim of Sarov Orthodox Church. Featuring the music of Josquin Desprez, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, and Orlande de Lassus, this site-specific concert juxtaposes Renaissance and early Baroque settings of angelic texts for two to eight voices with the spectacular frescoes of angels in the church.

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7:25 PM – Join us for a BachGrounder!
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Death and Resurrection

MY SON, ELIJAH, IS IN A FUNK. “Leave me alone!” he yelled at his siblings, whose every movement he views as a ploy to annoy him. Separated now in his room, he lies on the bed sulking and pouting, grumbling under his breath about the unfairness of being eight years old. Normally, I would scold him. “Snap out of it!” I’d say. But today, I too am funky and on edge, and I lie down next to him fighting back tears of frustration. There are days I feel discouraged, there are moments I feel ambivalent, and then there are times when I almost feel lifeless. Like my spiritual pulse is scarcely discernable amidst the tragic disease of my stubborn defiance. I am beyond aware of the depths of the depravity in my soul.

I coasted some. I let down my guard, seeing the finish line in clear view up ahead. I foolishly reasoned I could take it from here and ran on my own toward Pascha. A morning, however, not guarded by prayer leaves a heart more vulnerable to assaults. Over time that unprotected heart, riddled with wounds from the arrows of sin and despair, can barely beat out its sheepish plea for a divine intervention. It is frightening, this taste of an existence without Christ. It is terrifying outside the will of God.

So here I am, crawling into Holy Week head bowed and eyes lowered. I have mourned my lack of life like Mary and Martha mourned Lazarus days buried, and now throw myself, stinking of decay, at the feet of the Church and its sacraments. The weeks of Lent stretch long enough to push us past our limits, to force us into the reality of an instinctive desire to make ourselves a priority. The days of fasting bring us quite appropriately and authentically to our knees. I have nothing to pour upon Christ’s holy shroud but a broken spirit, and a mustard seed worth of faith that this offering will not be despised.

When I think of those present, waving palm branches and shouting praises, I am struck by the difficulties they must have endured. How certain they were that triumphant relief was theirs through this future king passing by on a donkey. How enormously disappointing to watch that Hope suffer, naked and bloodstained on a cross. They, too, tasted of bereavement through their preconceived notions of salvation being crushed before rising again. Just as I forget that violence and grace coexist until my time here is over,

until through physical death I attain, by God’s mercy, the victory of life everlasting.

I am anxious for the opportunity to bury myself with Christ—my weak self, my old self, and my resistant self so sickened with discontent. I am anxious to enter the sepulcher of my Savior, where all of us are equally dead; the strong and the weak both equally in need of a miracle to pull us out of this mess. During Holy Week, I will have no doubts that my fasting, my prayer, or my lack thereof, did not earn or deny me a chance to be resurrected. Because this silver lined burial can’t be bought or lost with appropriate behavior. Only those aware of their hopeless state, and who see no other way for deliverance outside the crucifixion will experience the triumphant relief in a stone rolled away from the tomb.

Already, my ears are aching for St. John Chrysostom’s Paschal Homily:

*And if any have tarried even until the eleventh hour,
let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness.
For the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even
as the first.
He giveth rest unto him who cometh at the eleventh hour,
even as unto him who hath wrought from the first hour.
And He sheweth mercy upon the last, and careth for the first;
and to the one He giveth, and upon the other He bestoweth gifts.
And He both accepteth the deeds, and welcometh the intention,
and honoureth the acts and praises the offering*

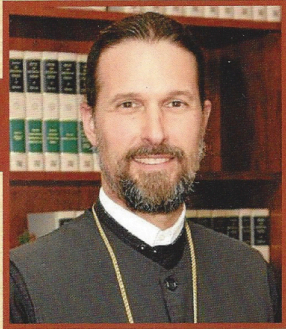
Oh, me, of little faith “snap out of it” and rejoice!

—Molly Sabourin, *Ancient Faith Radio*

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WITH FATHER JOSIAH TRENHAM



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PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

APRIL 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	30	31 - St. Innocent of Alaska <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Festal Matins for St. Innocent • 6:15 PM, Presanc., Archbishop Benjamin to serve 	1 NO MATINS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Presanc. 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Lenten Matins • 5 PM, Holy Unction for the sick 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, final Lenten Matins • 6:15 PM, Matins for Lazarus Saturday • 7 PM, Catechism 	4 - Lazarus Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • Breakfast • 2 PM, Work Party • 5 PM, Vigil with blessing of palms
5 - Palm Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy & Procession • Noon, Agape Meal 	6 - Great & Holy Mon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 4:30 PM, confession • 6:15 PM, Presanc. 	7 - Great & Holy Tues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 4:30 PM, confession • 6:15 PM, Presanc. 	8 - Great & Holy Wed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank Distribution</i> • 4:30 PM, confession • 6:15 PM, Presanc. 	9 - Great & Holy Thurs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy of the Mystical Supper • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Friday (reading of the 12 Gospels) 	10 - Great & Holy Friday <i>Strict Fast Day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Royal Hours • 3 PM, Burial Vespers for Blessed Sabbath • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Saturday 	11 - Great & Holy Sat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Exorcisms • 1 PM, Baptisms and Vesperal Liturgy • 11:30 PM, Nocturn, Matins and Liturgy
12 - Pascha <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 PM, Agape Vespers and BBQ 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins and Liturgy - <i>Archbishop Benjamin serving</i> • Meal to follow 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins and Liturgy • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	15	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers 	17	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 8 PM, Concert in Church: Sonoma Bach Consort*
19 - Thomas Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Potluck Meal 	20	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10:30 AM, Blessing Graves in Forestville, Healdsburg and Santa Rosa 	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	23 - St. George <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30 AM, Matins and Liturgy • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	24	25 - Men's Retreat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Breakfast • 9:30-3 PM, <i>Talks by Fr. Josiah Trenham</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
26 - Myrrhbearers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	27	28	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 AM, Catechism Revisited • 6 PM, Vespers 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting in Hall 	May 1	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers

* CONCERT: see info in the bulletin for the Sonoma Bach Consort performance