

## GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY ~ A SERMON

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! The present day [of Holy Thursday] is that of the Mystical Supper, which the Lord celebrated before His suffering and at which He instituted the Mystery of the Communion of His Body and Blood. We commune of Christ's Holy Mysteries on Sundays: this Mystery is the center of our Christian life, the center of our fellowship with Jesus Christ. This is paramount for someone who believes in God and is a member of Christ's Church. We indeed aspire towards this Mystery, and it is indeed very important for us to be with Christ and to commune of His Body and Life-Giving Blood.

...[Holy Thursday is a special day] for the Church, because today the meaning of our journey to Christ, the meaning of our encounter with Him, the meaning of our fellowship with Him is experienced more than ever. When Christ comes to His disciples, He removes His outer clothing, takes a basin with water and, approaching each disciple, begins to wash his feet. He washes the feet of each, including the betrayer, who will be unfaithful to Him. He washes their feet with love, meekness, and humility. In reply to the bewilderment of the disciples about why He is doing this, and to Peter's words—dost Thou wash my feet? (John 13:6)—Christ says: I am doing this so that you, too, would do this. This is the meaning of our encounter. This is the meaning of our fellowship.

Let us recall the Gospel and give thought to what the Lord commands us to do. Let us recall and be amazed, because in the Gospel the Lord does not in fact command us to do much of anything... He never gave any special instructions regarding philanthropy, fasts, or prayers. These had already been given. They are already present in every religion. They are naturally human. Without this someone is just not human, if he ignores beggars or the grieving and does not help them. This is not what makes him a new and different person. This is not what will lead him into the Heavenly Kingdom.

There was just one thing that He repeated constantly—many, many times to His disciples—in the Gospel: Whoever wants to be the chief among you, whoever wants to be the first, let him be the servant of all. The Lord repeats these words to us

persistently: the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. When He was completing His earthly journey, He washed the feet of His disciples in order to get across to us the most important thing in the Gospel. With this we please God.

Later He also said, and you will hear it [at the reading of the Twelve Gospel lessons ]most powerfully: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Love one another with the same love with which I love you, with the same love with which My Heavenly Father loves Me. Not with any love beside this: not with human, fleshly love, but with Divine, Ineffable, and Unutterable love. This Divine love is manifest in the Lord humbling Himself before people to the point of suffering on the Cross. To the point that, for our sake, He comes to earth, takes on human nature in all its fullness, with all its sinful repercussions and human infirmities, and enters the depths of every person's suffering; He does not reject any sinner, but comes to them first. He says: I came to earth for their sake, for the sake of publicans, sinners, and harlots. He eats with them and drinks with them. He spends more time with them than with anyone else. This

### FASTING, ALMSGIVING, AND PRAYER:

The Three Great Lenten Disciplines



Join us for an Orthodox Women's Retreat!

Saturday April 9, 2016  
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Vespers at 5 p.m.

*Suggested donation \$20 per person*

Protection of the Holy Virgin Parish, St. Seraphim Orthodox Church  
90 Mountain View Ave., Santa Rosa, Ca 95407

Register by April 2, 2016

Mail your Registration form and payment to Sisterhood at above address.

Make checks payable to:  
St. Mary's Sisterhood

Inquire about possible scholarships at:  
dfpanages@yahoo.com

Guest Speaker

*Suggested donation \$20 per person. Includes a morning snack and lunch.*



**Mother Melania**

Superior of Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga.

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin  
St. Seraphim of Sarov Church  
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The Rector, Fr. Lawrence Margitich, may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at [Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net). He is available Tuesday-Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

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is something we also need to picture. It is unpleasant for us to be around dishonorable and unclean people; we want to dissociate ourselves from them. This is something naturally human, a naturally human fear of touching something infected. But Christ was with them above all, in order to save man. And He began to serve them. He began to pour Himself out completely for their sake—for their sake, and for ours, because we are no different from them.

The Lord washes His disciples' feet because He always does this, because this is something He does constantly. This is the way in which He treats us. When we have only just come into church, when we are only just getting ready to approach Him, He immediately begins to wash our feet. Yes, it is essential that we come to Church, but, the mystery of that still needs to be opened in our hearts, how we are nourished to do Godly work in this world. What do we do for God only by coming to church, going to confession, writing commemoration sheets? Let's understand that by coming to church we are entering that same upper room where the Lord gathered His disciples and washed their feet. When we come to church He begins to do just this for us, because when we go to confession, He begins to serve us and to wash not only our feet, but our hands and head as well, because we are defiled. He washes us all in confession. We come to God in order to ask His help, but He immediately begins to serve us and to fulfill even our petty desires and our empty, mundane, human demands that are of no spiritual benefit to us. This is what is opened up to us today, Holy Thursday. Today we do not simply approach

Christ and accept His sacrifice for us. Today we approach Christ to offer our own sacrifice, so that He would accept it, so that we would be at least a little bit worthy, so that the Lord would accept our sacrifice. This is the sacrifice of love and humility, and nothing else. Because nothing else leads us into the Heavenly Kingdom except for this desire to see another person in the light of His love: to forget his shortcomings, his distortedness, his sinful twistedness, and to see in him Christ Himself, Who came into the world and made Himself your neighbor, as the Gospel teaches us.

Without this no Christianity will take place. Without this there is no Church of God, because the Church of God is the continual service of love for God and one another. If we understand that this divine love is not yet in us, that we would like to love but cannot, this means that we lack the most elementary thing: humility. In order to gain this love, we need to act as the Lord teaches us: to see your master in your neighbor. St. Symeon the New Theologian said: whoever has seen his brother has seen his God. When we receive His Holy Body and Blood today, let us ask that, as we leave church, we may see the world through different eyes, the eyes through which the saints saw our world: whoever has seen his brother has seen his God. Amen. —Fr. Alexei Uminsky, sermon delivered in the Church of the Life-Giving Trinity in Khokhly (Moscow), 2005



## SOLOMON'S SONG OF SONGS

Following last season's smash *Angels Everywhere*, our one-on-a-part **Sonoma Bach Consort** will once again join forces with the Green Mountain Singers, singing exquisite late Medieval, Renaissance, and early Baroque settings from the Song of Songs. This pair of concerts will take place in St. Seraphim Church, with readings from Ariel and Chana Bloch's strikingly beautiful translation of the song.

Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 8 PM  
St. Seraphim of Sarov, Santa Rosa  
BachGrounder lecture: 7:25 PM

Sunday, April 17, 2016 at 3 PM  
St. Seraphim of Sarov, Santa Rosa  
BachGrounder lecture: 2:25 PM

## FIFTH FRIDAY OF LENT AKATHIST (APRIL 15)

ON THE DAY AFTER we pray the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, we are invited once again to Church in the evening, Friday April 15 at 6 PM, to sing the beautiful and moving *Akathist Hymn/Matins to the Theotokos*, praises to the Mother of our Savior. Having made a last “push” towards repentance the day before, the *Akathist Hymn* joyfully praises the incarnation of the Son of God, and it expresses our love for the All Holy One, the Virgin, and gives us in return a consoling gift of her intercessions, and through that, a taste of the coming joy of Pascha. The *Akathist* is undoubtedly one of the most beloved hymns of the Church. As we sing it, we remember and the events related to our Lord’s Incarnation become real for us: we hear that the Archangel Gabriel marvels at the Divine self-emptying and the renewal of creation which will occur when Christ comes to dwell in the Virgin’s womb; the yet unborn John the Baptist prophetically rejoices in his mother’s womb; the shepherds recognize Christ as a blameless Lamb, and rejoice that in the Virgin “the things

of earth join chorus with the heavens.” The pagan Magi following the light of the star praise Her for revealing the light of the world, and so on.

The hymn is comprised of 24 stanzas, arranged in an acrostic following the Greek alphabet. The stanzas alternate between long and short. Each short stanza is written in prose and ends with the singing of “Alleluia.” Each longer stanza ends with the refrain: “Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded” (the word *akathistos* means “not sitting,” i.e., standing; normally all participants stand while it is being prayed). Extremely popular in Greece, Russia, Romania, etc. unfortunately, this Akathist of the Fifth Friday does not seem to be a favorite of our parishioners—who perhaps haven’t attended because they are not aware of the beauty of the Service. I encourage you this year to come to this glorious hymn in honor of the Theotokos, under whose protection our parish is placed. — *Fr. Lawrence*

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## HOLY SATURDAY: a change of plans

THE CUSTOM HERE for decades has been to have a reception of bread, nuts, dried fruit and wine after the Vespertal Liturgy on Holy Saturday. The practice comes from the instructions in the *Triodion* (service book for Lent) that specifies that after the Vespertal Liturgy (which it says should begin at 4 PM!! Ours begins at 1 PM) bread, wine and nuts/dried fruit are blessed—olive oil is forbidden on this one Saturday of the year—and the faithful sit in the Church (by then it’s about 8 PM), eat the food, and listen to a reading of the Book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles until the Paschal Nocturn begins late that evening. There’s the origination, and obviously, it’s beyond what a typical parish can or should do. As you know, we do bless the food after the Liturgy, and serve it from the Hall porch. The reception is lovely, but perhaps it’s become more than

it needs to be. It’s time to scale back our Holy Saturday post-Liturgy reception (the Council and Sisterhood members agreed), for the following reasons: the size of the reception grows each year (Praise God for the increase), and with it set-up and clean-up. The size of the set-up and cleanup crew has not grown. Secondly, after the long Vespertal Liturgy, perhaps it’s best to forego the social gathering (the Pascha BBQ is the next day anyway) and instead go home and rest up for the exertions yet to come. Finally, the flower crew, the sacristans and clergy will still have a great deal of work to be done in the Church to prepare it for the Paschal Services. Hopefully, a bit less work and socializing on Holy Saturday will allow us to offer the Lord a better, more alert and worthy preparation for the Paschal Liturgy. — *Fr. Lawrence*

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## A HOMILY AT PASCHA AGAPE VESPERS

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is risen! Christos Voskreshe! Voistinu voskreshe!  
Christos Anesti! Alithos anesti! Al Masiah Kam! Hakkam kam!

MY DEAR PEOPLE! The magnificent hymnology which we heard last night and this afternoon are all saturated with the entire meaning, significance and doctrines of the Faith. Really, nothing more could be said. My editors have told me that all I have to say is, “Christ is risen!” (Indeed He is risen!) And it’s so true! But I can’t do that—because I heard those

magnificent words: *“Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice; let the whole world, both visible and invisible, keep the feast—for this is the day of the Resurrection! This is the day that the Lord has made; it is the Pascha of the Lord! For from death to life, and from earth to heaven, has Christ our God led us, as we sing the song of victory!”*

The entire celebration of Pascha is the brightest, loveliest, most irrepressible joy that we could have when we realize that we no longer have to fear death; for death is no longer a gateway leading to extinction, but death is the doorway leading to the grace of our heavenly God. And all of this is clearly reflected, almost in a saturated way, in the magnificence of the poetry, the prayers, the song, the ritual.

The Resurrection is the basis, the foundation of our Christian faith. If Christ remained on the cross, we wouldn't be here today, would we? If Christ remained on the cross, it would be the most sorrowful thing; just another martyr has died. But Christ did not remain on the cross. The world said “No” to God on Friday, and on Pascha morning God said, “Christ is risen!” “As in Adam all died,” said Saint Paul, “so even in Christ all shall be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15.22) And Saint Gregory the Theologian put it in this way: “Yesterday I was crucified with Christ; today I am glorified with him. Yesterday I was buried with him; today I rise with him,” just as those who were baptized rose to a new life, to a life everlasting. Pascha is the Eighth Day, meaning—as we have expressed in the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse of St. John—it's the *never-ending day*, where there is no evening, there is no morning. It is the icon of the image of the world to come.

And so on this magnificent day, it has to be expressed once more, in response to the cynicism of the world. The world doesn't care what we have done the last few days. But it is an expression of our fundamental faith, the faith as revealed in the historical person of Jesus Christ. Everything in the Scriptures, everything that the Fathers and Saints have written about, everything that the Prophets have prophesied, relates existentially to all of us, but in particular it relates to us internally, externally and eternally—for Christ is risen! (Indeed He is risen!)

Before His Ascension, the Lord said, “I'll be with you 'til the end of all time.” (Matt. 28.20b) This means, in spite of all—as Father Lawrence mentioned on Good Friday—this means that life is worth living, even if this world is showing signs of going insane. I was going to say, “Going to Hell...” It means the destruction of death. It

means that the countless martyrs throughout the ages who have given their lives for the faith, and even those martyrs who were martyred for their Christian faith just a few days ago, have not died in vain. The Scriptures teach that in times past, we were no people, and now we are a people (1 Pet. 2.10a); meaning, we are a people of the Resurrection, who received, and walk by, the light of Christ. And that's why Saint Paul calls to us, “Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord always; the Lord is with us, He is at hand.” (Phil. 4.4-5) And that's why you heard the choir again and again use that term, “rejoice.”

Some time ago I read about a Russian Orthodox priest who spent twenty years in the gulag prison camps, enduring all human indignities because he refused to give up his faith. When he was released, his daughter wrote in her memoirs that she noticed he had difficulty walking and talking. She took him to the clinic, and the doctors indicated that he had what we call today progressive muscular atrophy. Gradually, he lost his ability to walk and to speak. And on Pascha morning, before he died, he scribbled this note to his daughter: “It's terrible to wake up on Pascha morning and have no voice to sing ‘Christos Voskrese.’ But it's still more tragic to **have a voice** and not sing, ‘Christ is risen. This is the Day of Resurrection!’”

So the passing, my dear people, the passing of time has in no way altered, diminished or negated that glorious, glorious proclamation that our Redeemer lives; the King of kings, the Lord of lords still reigns, who said, “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, even though he die, he shall live.” (Jn. 11.25) So therefore, the great John Chrysostom, in his homily on Pascha night, said, “Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free.” And Saint Paul cried out, “O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us victory through Christ Jesus.” (1 Cor. 15.55, 57) And there is so much more to say... but let me conclude, because my editors have put a note in here...

Let me conclude by saying that Pascha, this day, my dear people, is the most incredible, most glorious historical news for us. That's why we could stand before the grave and sing, “Christ is risen;” that's why we could sing, “Memory eternal” — because it is a touchable reality. And you heard in the Gospel today, Jesus said to Thomas, ‘Here, look at my hands; feel my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’” (Jn. 20.27) My dear people, it is a touchable reality, an embraceable reality that leads to

everlasting life, where there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, no more struggles, no more sighing, no more pain.

And on the waves of the seven weeks of fasting, of prostrations and services, and the talks...

On the waves, we have reached this glorious moment. It is a moment of joy.

And so, therefore, let us lift up our hearts. Let us lift up our voice to glorify and praise the divine victory of Christ, who trampled down death by death. And so, let us embrace one another once more, and let us even cry out to those who hate us, let us sing: *(all singing)* "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!" —*Archpriest Michael Margitich, sermon at Agape Vespers, April 12, 2015*



## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **REGISTRATION FOR SISTERHOOD RETREAT:** Sunday, after Divine Liturgy. Please note that Child Care will be offered to those who need.
- **THE YOUNG ADULT GROUP WILL MEET** on Saturday, March 26, and Saturday, April 9, following Great Vespers.
- **CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER MEETING:** Thursday, March 31, Parish Library.
- **ORTHODOX CHURCH IN NORWAY:** Fr. Theodor will offer a talk with slides on the Orthodox Church in Norway, following Great Vespers on Saturday, April 2, approximately 6 PM.
- **PARISH COUNCIL:** Our meeting will take place not on our usual third or fourth Thursday of the month, but on Tuesday, April 5, at 7 PM.
- **THE SENIOR/RETIRED LUNCH FELLOWSHIP** will be held on Thursday, April 7.
- **MASTER PLANNING:** Meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 7 at 7 PM
- **CARMINA CHROMATICA:** Nicolas Custer's renaissance choral ensemble will present a free concert for the parish on Sunday, April 10 at 1:30 PM, in St. Seraphim. They will sing eight motets on lenten themes, six from the Renaissance, one by C. Saint-Saëns, and one piece, which is a premier performance by a member of the group.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution will take place on Wednesday, April 13. Volunteers: please try to arrive by at 5 PM.
- **CHOIR REHEARSAL:** The annual Lenten Saturday Choir Rehearsal for Holy Week and Pascha is scheduled for April 16, 10:30 AM.
- **CLEANING THE CHURCH BEFORE HOLY WEEK:** Friday, April 22, the last day of Great Lent, from 2 PM until 4 PM, and Saturday, April 23, from 1 PM until 3 PM. Work to be done: clean lamps, polish candle stands, processional lamp, scrape wax, clean floor, etc.
- **DECORATING THE CHURCH** for Palm Sunday will take place on Lazarus Saturday, April 23, at 3 PM.
- **LAZARUS SATURDAY:** The Children's Choir will sing the Divine Liturgy for the feast of Lazarus Saturday, April 23. Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM.
- **CONFESSION BEFORE PASCHA:** As we intensify our spiritual work of fasting, alms, prayers at home and serving God in Church, we make an effort to examine on our mind, heart and words as we prepare for Pascha. This is the work of repentance—a continual turning to our loving Savior. Integral to repentance is Confession. Don't delay in confessing—the Lord stands at the door and knocks.
- **TIMES FOR CONFESSION:** 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.  
Confessions before and during Holy Week: Before and during the Vigil for Palm Sunday, 5 PM, April 24  
Holy Monday–Wednesday: after Matins / after 12 Noon, by appointment  
4:30 PM until and then during Presanctified
- **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.
- **PARISH NEEDS:** pick up "Glendi fencing" by east ditch (again); mow vineyard and mound (Z. Marino to do); the Ride Ministry needs volunteers (see Deanna Panages); someone to clean offices and library; Maintain playground equipment (scrub stains off plastic slide, tighten bolts, fill in gravel, etc.); Weekly tasks: clean up playground and porch of all garbage, plates and cups after Sunday lunch.

# PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## APRIL 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 • 10:30 AM, Presanctified Liturgy	2 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on Holy Unction</i> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, <i>Orthodoxy in Norway</i>
<b>3 - Veneration of the Cross</b> • 9 AM, Matins (Bringing out of the Holy Cross) • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	4	5 • 8 AM, Matins  • <b>7 PM, Parish Council Meeting</b>	6 • 8 AM, Matins  • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy	7 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Senior Lunch • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting	8 • 8 AM, Matins	9 * 9 AM, <i>Sisterhood Retreat</i> * • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Young Adult Group
<b>10 - St. John Climacus</b> • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:30 PM, <i>Carmina Chromatica Concert</i>	11	12 • 8 AM, Matins	13 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, <i>Food Bank</i> • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy	14 • 9 AM, Matins with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	<b>15 - Akathist Hymn</b> • 8 AM, Matins  • 6 PM, Matins with the Akathist to the Theotokos	16 • 10:30 AM, Choir Rehearsal  • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on Death and the Funeral</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
<b>17 - St. Mary of Egypt</b> • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	18	19 • 8 AM, Matins	20 • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanc. Liturgy (Vladyka Benjamin to serve)	21 • 8 AM, Matins	22 • 8 AM, Matins  • 6 :15 PM, Matins for Lazarus Saturday	<b>23 - Lazarus Saturday</b> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Children's Choir to sing) • 3 PM, Church decoration • 5 PM, <i>VIGIL for Palm Sun</i>
<b>24 - Entrance into Jerusalem</b> • 10 AM, Liturgy and Procession • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	<b>25 - Great &amp; Holy Mon.</b> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 4:30 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Presanc. Liturgy	<b>26 - Great &amp; Holy Tues.</b> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 4:30 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Presanc. Liturgy	<b>27 - Great &amp; Holy Wednes.</b> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 4:30 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Presanc. Liturgy	<b>28 - Great &amp; Holy Thurs.</b> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Divine Liturgy • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Friday	<b>29 - Great &amp; Holy Friday</b> • 9 AM, Royal Hours • 3 PM, "Burial Vespers" • 7 PM, Matins for Holy Saturday	<b>30 - Great &amp; Holy Saturday</b> • Noon, Exorcisms for Catechumens • 1 PM, Baptism/Vesperal Liturgy • 11:30 PM, Nocturn, Paschal Matins and Liturgy
<b>May 1 - PASCHA</b> • Paschal Matins/Liturgy • 1 PM, Agape Vespers and Potluck BBQ	<b>2 - Bright Monday</b> • 9 AM, Paschal Matins and Liturgy (Vladyka Benjamin to serve)	<b>3 - Bright Tuesday</b> • 9 AM, Paschal Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers	<b>4 - Bright Wednesday</b>	<b>5 - Bright Thursday</b> • 6 PM, Vespers	<b>6 - Bright Friday</b> • 6 PM, Vespers	<b>7 - Bright Saturday</b> • 9 AM, Paschal Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers