

THE GREAT FAST ~ Finding Rest in God

PEOPLE FEEL UNHAPPY and they don't know why. They feel that something is wrong, but they can't put their finger on what. They feel uneasy in the world, confused and frustrated, alienated and estranged, and they can't explain it. They have everything and yet they want more. And when they get it, they are still left empty and dissatisfied. They want happiness and peace, and nothing seems to bring it. They want fulfillment, and it never seems to come. Everything is fine, and yet everything is wrong. In America this is almost a national disease. It is covered over by frantic activity and endless running around. It is buried in activities and events. It is drowned out by television programs and games. But when the movement stops and the dial is turned off and everything is quiet...then the dread sets in, and the meaninglessness of it all, and the boredom, and the fear. Why is this so? Because, the Church tells us, we are really not at home. We are in exile. We are alienated and estranged from our

true country. We are not with God our Father in the land of the living. We are spiritually sick. And some of us are already dead.

Our hearts are made for God, St. Augustine has said, and we will be forever restless until we rest in Him. Our lives are made for God, and we will be unfulfilled and dissatisfied and frustrated until we go to Him. All of God's creatures, as Francis Thompson said in his poem *The Hound of Heaven*, are His "loyal betrayers." They do not satisfy His children and cannot bring them peace. He alone can do that, because He alone is our home. And we are His. The lenten season is the time for our conscious return to our true home. It is the time set aside for us to come to ourselves and to get up and go to the divine reality to which we truly belong.

*Excerpt from **The Lenten Spring** by Fr. Thomas Hopko
St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983, p. 21-22*

Great Lent and Its Opportunities

THE PERIOD BEFORE LENT which we are going through gives birth, or should give birth, to a special feeling within us. The most beautiful and solemn hymnography of this period, the many liturgical occasions, and the lenten fast are calling us to assemble ourselves. To stoop within us, to figure out our problems, to self-evaluate towards a sincere repentance.

...Great Lent works like an X-Ray machine, like a photographic camera, like a mirror. ...it reveals our hidden reality. Today's spirit of consumerism, comfort and pride leaves man a prisoner of the many unnecessary things that have filled his life. Great Lent is a halt to this routine and a transfiguration. A prayer said in the divine services during this entire period hundreds of times, written by Ephraim the Syrian, urges us to abandon sloth, curiosity, love of power and idle talk and gain wisdom, humility, patience and love. This beautiful and meaningful prayer ends by asking God: "Grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother." That is, to abandon gossip, over-analyzing, and the strict and continuous judgement of others, and to turn within ourselves, correcting our own mistakes. Great Lent wants us to focus on ourselves and contribute to the healing of our spiritual

diseases, which darken our minds and make our lives difficult and bitter. If we reach this self-knowledge and repentance, then Great Lent will not be a gloomy and barren time for us, or a simple time to fulfill our "moral duties," but an opportunity to soften our hardened hearts, which will lead us to the love for people and the love for God. ...Often during the time of Great Lent we encounter temptations, trials, tribulations and failures. These are to mature us, to help us acquire balance and a child-like nature. Let us not forget that the life of the Christian is one of the Cross. Without crucifixion there will come no resurrection. Great Lent is a beautiful and good time for preparation, a semi-darkened corridor leading us to a chamber full of light. The foundation of this preparatory time are prayer and fasting. ...In the Church, our problems find their solution. The cold winter is followed by spring. The *Triodion* is followed by the *Pentecostarion* [hymn book for Pascha until Pentecost and All Saints]. The clouds are never permanent, but afterwards the sunshine is much better. And now, as a wonderful troparion says, it is the "time of repentance and the hour for prayer." —*Monk Moses of Mount Athos*

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. He is available Tuesday-Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts


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LITURGY ON CHEESE-FARE SATURDAY March 12, 9 AM


ON THE DAY prior to Forgiveness Sunday we commemorate all our venerable and God-bearing Fathers and Mothers who shone forth in the ascetic and monastic life. The Church honors the monastic saints before Lent begins, since we are in need examples of the ascetic life. Also, we do not begin Great Lent alone, but as part of a family (which is why the next day is about forgiveness!). We have many intercessors to help us in this family: righteous men and women that became holy by God's grace—who dwell with “all the saints.” We are invited to see how by humbly living the Orthodox faith, through prayer and fasting, the monastic holy ones brought forth “fruits worthy of repentance” and attained true likeness of God. We are encouraged to follow, as we can in our own life situation, their example. The hymns encourage us to be inspired by their ways of prayer, humility, compassion, love, works of mercy, steadfast adherence to the Orthodox faith, and so forth. One hymn summarizes the message of the day:

Withstanding by ascetic effort the destructive passions, ye preserved in purity the spiritual power of the mind [nous], created in God's image; and, so far as man is able, ye attained the divine likeness. For bravely ye did violence to your nature, submitting the lower to the higher, making the flesh subject to the Spirit. So ye became perfect in the solitary life, citizens of the desert, teachers to all who run upon the path of self-denial, unerring guides to virtue. And now in heaven, all-holy saints, passing beyond all images and mirrors, ye gaze with clear vision upon the Holy Trinity, and without intermediary ye pray for those who honor you with faith and love.


So that we too might in some small way also enter into the joy and triumph of the monastic saints, and receive the fragrance of their humility and spirit of their ascetic life, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy, March 12 at 9 AM. This day is also the anniversary of the repose of the ever-memorable Archpriest Victor Sokolov, and so memorial prayers will be offered for him. —Fr. Lawrence




DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS!



The Sisterhood of St Elisabeth takes care of children and adults with mental and physical disabilities in boarding homes and patients of the National Psychiatric Hospital.



Sisters offer love and spiritual help to the sick and work hard to improve the living conditions for the children suffering from Down's syndrome, birth traumas and cerebral palsy.




They also help ex-prisoners, drug and alcohol addicts at rehabilitation center established for this purpose.

We will have a visiting sister from the Convent of St. Elisabeth (Minsk, Belarus) on


Wednesday, March 23 following the Presanctified

The Sisterhood of St. Elisabeth was founded in 1996 and was named in honour of the Holy Martyr and Grand Princess Saint Elisabeth.




PLEASE TAKE THIS SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY to support beautiful work and mission of the sisters by purchasing the items of devotion.

www.obitel-minsk.by stelisabethconvent@gmail.com




Sisters brought with them beautiful religious handicrafts made in the workshops of the Convent.



Handicrafts are available after Masses in our church. The goods at display:

- church vestments;
- icons;
- crosses;
- rosaries;
- other religious items;
- souvenirs;
- Cds.



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **FATHER LAWRENCE** will give a forty-five minute overview of Great Lent—a practical approach—on the porch of our Parish Hall, Sunday, February 28, at about 12:30 PM.
- **THE NEWLY FORMING CHILDREN'S CHOIR** (ages five and up), led by Reader Nicolas, Jeanie Carl, Genevieve Richardson and Ellen Aylward, will be rehearsing on Saturdays from 4–4:40 PM, in the Protection Church. Parents, please speak with Nicolas Custer if you would like to enroll your child in this new endeavor. The immediate goal will be to prepare for the Lazarus Saturday Liturgy on April 23. First rehearsal: Saturday, February 27.
- **THE YOUNG ADULT GROUP** will gather at the Rectory on Sunday, Feb. 27 at 5 PM for a pizza dinner, and a Q&A time (being called "Stump the Priests") with Fathers Lawrence and Theodor. Young adults, ages 18–28, are welcome.
- **ALTAR SERVER TEAMS:** Feb. 28–Team Cherubim; March 6–Team Seraphim; March 13–Team Cherubim; March 20, Sunday of Orthodoxy–Team Seraphim for the Divine Liturgy, both teams for the procession at the end; March 27–Team Cherubim.
- **RETREAT IN CALISTOGA AT THE MONASTERY:** Archimandrite Irenei will be giving a Retreat at Holy Assumption Monastery, Saturday, March 5, beginning at 9 AM. The talks are entitled "Bearing Witness: Martyrdom in Everyday Life in the 21st century."
- **BLINI:** The Blini agape lunch will be held on Sunday, March 6.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution will take place on Wednesday, March 9, the day of the Forty Holy Martyrs. Volunteers: please try to arrive by 5 PM.
- **THE SENIOR/RETIRED LUNCH** will be held on Thursday, March 10, at Noon. All retired and seniors are invited.
- **PRE-LENTEN SERVICES:** The Matins and Vespers served in the week before Lent have a wonderful Lenten character to them. You'll hear the Prayer of St. Ephraim and the Lenten melodies as a preparation for the coming Fast.
- **AVALYN GLANVILLE**, daughter of Marina and Evan, will be baptized on Saturday, March 12 at 1:30 PM, in St. Seraphim Church.
- **FORGIVENESS SUNDAY** (AKA the "Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise") is Sunday, March 13. Vespers of Forgiveness to be served at 1:15 PM. Great Lent begins here.
- **OUR PARISH WILL** host the winter season's final Nomadic Shelter once again on March 24. Guests arrive about 6 PM.



GET YOUR
APPLICATIONS IN
EARLY
2016 CAMP DATES
JULY 3RD THRU
JULY 9TH



Start making your memories this year by joining us in the hills of Dunlap, CA for a week of exciting and fun activities while creating lifelong friendships among other Orthodox Christians. Please use this flier as a means of making monthly payments for your camper.

*Remit payments to: Kathy Pieracci, Camp Treasurer
9535 Sun Poppy Way
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762*

A payment recap will be sent with Camp Applications in May with your balance due.

2016 CAMP FEES

\$385 per camper, with discounts for siblings

THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, the local autocephalous Orthodox Church, is to be faithful in fulfilling the commandment of Christ to "Go into all the world and make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all [things that He has] commanded" so that all people may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth: To preach, in accordance with God's will, the fullness of the gospel of the Kingdom to the peoples of North America and to invite them to become members of the Orthodox Church. To utilize for her mission the various languages of the peoples of this continent. To be the body of Christ in North America and to be faithful to the tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church. To witness to the truth, and by God's grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to reveal Christ's way of sanctification and eternal salvation to all.

Adopted by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, 1990

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb. 28 – Prodigal Son • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:30 PM, “ <i>Porch-Lecture</i> ” <i>on Great Lent</i> , by Fr. Lawrence	29	1	2 • 6 PM, Vespers	3 • 6 PM, Vespers	4 - St. Daniel of Moscow • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	5 <i>(Fr. Irenei in Calistoga for a Talk)</i> (no catechism today) • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
6 – Last Judgment • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, <i>Blini Luncheon</i>	7	8 • 6 PM, Vespers for the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste	9 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers	10 • Noon, Senior Lunch • 6 PM, Vespers	11 • 8 AM, Matins	12 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 1:30 PM, Baptism • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on the Holy Eucharist</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
13 – Forgiveness Sunday • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, Vespers of Forgiveness	14 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Sixth Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	15 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Sixth Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	16 • 8 AM, Canon of St. Andrew • Noon, Sixth Hour • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts/Meal	17 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Sixth Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	18 • 10:30 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and Canon to St. Theodore the Recruit	19 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on the Holy Priesthood</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
20 – Sunday of Orthodoxy • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy with Procession of icons • Noon, Potluck Agape	21	22 • 8 AM, Matins	23 • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts/Meal • <i>Visit by Sisters from St. Elizabeth Monastery in Minsk</i>	24 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Nomadic Shelter • 6:15 PM, Vigil for Annunciation	25 - Annunciation <i>Strict Fast</i> • 5:30 PM, Vesperal Liturgy for Annunciation	26 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on Marriage</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Vespers
27 – St. Gregory Palamas • 8:45 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	28	29 • 8 AM, Matins	30 • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts/Meal	31 • 8 AM, Festal Matins: St. Innocent of Alaska	APRIL 1 • 10:30 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	2 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>on Holy Unction</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Vespers • 6 PM, <i>Talk on the Orthodox Church in Norway</i> by Fr Theodor