

THE PLACE OF MAN'S DEIFICATION

THOSE WHO WISH to unite with Christ, and, through Jesus Christ, with God the Father, recognize that this union is realized in the body of Christ, which is our Holy Orthodox Church. A union, of course, not with the Divine essence, but with the deified human nature of Christ. But this union with Christ is not external, nor is it simply moral.

We are not followers of Christ in the way that some perhaps follow a philosopher or a teacher. We are members of Christ's body, the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, the real body, not a moral one, as some theologians have mistakenly written, not having looked deeply into the spirit of the Holy Church. In spite of our unworthiness and sinfulness, Christ takes us Christians and incorporates us into His body. He makes us members of Himself. And so we become real members of the body of Christ, not just morally. As the Apostle Paul puts it, 'We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Eph. 5:30).

Certainly, depending on the spiritual state of Christians, they are sometimes living members of Christ's body, and at other times dead. Yet, even as dead members, they do not cease to be members of Christ's body. For example, someone who is baptized has become a member of Christ's body. If he does not confess, does not take Communion, does not live a spiritual life, he is a dead member of Christ's body. But when he repents, he immediately receives divine life. This permeates him and he becomes a living member of Christ's body...What a great blessing that we partake of the immaculate Mysteries! Christ becomes ours; Christ's life becomes ours; His blood becomes our blood. This is why St. John Chrysostom says that God has nothing more to give man than what he gives him in Holy Communion. Neither can man ask for anything beyond what he receives from Christ in Holy Communion.

...The Church is not a social, cultural, or historical institution, and it does not resemble any other institution in the world. It is not like the different establishments of the world. Perhaps the world has fine establishments, fine organizations, fine institutions and other fine things. But our Orthodox Church is without comparison, the sole place for the communication of God with man; of man's deification. Only within the Church can man become a god, and nowhere else. Neither in universities, nor in

social service foundations, nor in any of the fine and good things that the world has. All these, however good they may be, they are not able to offer what the Church offers.

...It is possible that we, the weak and sinful, go through crises and difficulties from time to time within the Church. It is possible even for scandals to happen in the bosom of the Church. All these happen in the Church because we are as yet on the way to *theosis*, and it is very natural that human weaknesses still exist. We are becoming gods, but not yet. So, no matter how often these things occur, we will not leave the Church, because within the Church we have the only possibility to unite with God.

For example, when we go to Church to attend the service, we may meet people there who do not pay attention to the holy service; who hold conversations and distract our attention. Then along comes a seemingly reasonable thought which says: 'What do you gain by coming to Church? Might it not be better to sit at home in greater peace and comfort?' We, however, must prudently contradict this evil thought: 'Yes, perhaps on the one hand I will have more outward peace at home, but I will not have God's Grace to deify and sanctify me. I will not have Christ, Who is present in His Church. I will not have His Holy Body and His precious Blood, which are on the holy Altar in His holy Church. I will not partake in the Mystical Supper of the Holy Liturgy. I will be cut off from my fellow brethren in Christ, together with whom we form Christ's body.' So, no matter what happens, we will not leave the Church, because only within it do we find the path to deification. — *By Archimandrite George, Abbott of the Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios on Mount Athos*

St. John Chrysostom on the Charity of Fasting

...fasting is a tool by which our bodily natures are reclaimed and reunited to the spiritual. And for this reason, as we enter upon the Nativity Fast, we must take blessed attention towards our body as well as our soul, uniting them together in the ascetical project. And yet, we must not become conceited, focusing solely on ourselves.

We fast in order to reclaim creation, to offer this world which we have disfigured through our sin back to God, and our fathers teach us that we must begin this

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

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

Bobbi Griovski, Parish Secretary	584-9491
Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Second Priest	318-1559
Fr. Theodor Svane, Intern Priest	(914) 282-0867
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
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

project in our own heart. For if our own heart is weighed down, we can no more lift another up than we can ourselves. And yet, the project of working on our heart is a pastoral project, a missionary project. For when our heart is restored to communion, when we are lifted up ourselves to God, we are able to do the same to the cosmos, to the world around us. So fasting, though it focuses inward on the heart, is nonetheless an act of charity, of love, of giving to the other in this world. And this is constantly reminded to us by the fathers. It is one of the reasons that almsgiving is tied into fasting, and when we fast, we deliberately engage in acts of charity, reclaiming not only our body, but our time and our activities back from our selfish preoccupations into an orientation aimed at the other, at all of creation. In that light, hear these words of Saint John. “Do you fast?” He asks. *Then feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick, do not forget the imprisoned, have pity on the tortured, comfort those who grieve and those who weep. Be merciful, humble, kind, calm, patient, sympathetic, forgiving, reverent, truthful and pious so that God might accept your fasting and might plentifully grant you the fruits of repentance.*

This is the spirit of self-offering that must accompany the ascetical dimensions of any fast. Though we refrain in our own life from certain acts, behaviors, foods, occupations which might keep us from God, we also add to our lives during the fast: an increase of prayer, an increase of time in the Church, an increase of love towards our brother and our sister. This becomes the litmus test of the true fast. Do I fast solely to the end that I have given up certain foods, that

I have given up certain activities, but have in no way changed my relationship to neighbor or God? If that is the judgment of my fast, then it is a fast not of God, but of the demons. It is a fast of selfishness. The true litmus test of the fast is whether through these acts of sacrifice, of ascesis, we have grown in love towards our brother. We have developed in our heart a Christ-like demeanor that has come about through reclaiming ourselves from sin. St. John says in another place, *Do not say to me, I fasted for so many days. I did not eat this or I did not eat that. I did not drink wine, that I endured want. Instead, show me if thou, from an angry man, has become instead gentle. If from a cruel man, thou hast become benevolent. If thou art filled with anger, why oppress thy flesh? If hatred and avarice are within thee, of what benefit is it that thou drinkest water instead of wine? Do not show forth a useless fast, for fasting alone does not ascend to heaven.* Let this be our reminder as we engage in the fast leading us to the Nativity according to the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not engage in what St. John calls “a useless fast” which attempts to ascend to heaven by its own merits, its own power, repeating the sin of the people of the Tower of Babel. Let us instead use the fast as the Church intends and the fathers instruct: as a time to work out our transformation by God’s grace. What sacrifices we make, let them be sacrifices that transform us. They are not ends in and of themselves. They are the tools by which we can become a little closer to God’s image, a little closer to Christ’s life. Let us use the fast as a time of charity, of love, of meekness and ultimately, have great and unending joy in the incarnate and risen Lord. Through the prayers of our holy fathers and the saints, John the Golden-Mouthed of Constantinople and of all the saints, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

—Archimandrite Irenei (Steenburg) from his podcast “Word from the Holy Fathers”

• **FAITH IN GOD:** “How can I become what God would have me be?” This is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian—to be transformed from within, through the grace and wisdom of the Church. We don’t approach the Church assuming that we know better—if this is our approach, then it obvious that we have lost our way...far too often, this reality, this message, gets lost. The Church has been described as a spiritual hospital for sick and lost souls. This is a wonderful image, and when the Church’s mission in the world gets covered over by other missions, other messages, people get confused and can get lost. —Herman Middleton

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- AN EIGHT PART SERIES on the basic teachings of the Orthodox Church will begin on Saturday, October 31, at 3:30 PM. Classes will take place in the Protection Church every Saturday afternoon (except as noted). Catechumens are expected to attend, all others are invited.
- HONORING THE SAINTS: On Sunday, November 1, the Church School of St. Seraphim's will host an evening of "Honoring the Saints" for our church community in the Parish Hall. The youth (of all ages!) are encouraged to read about the life of a saint of their choice—could be their patron saint, could be another—and come dressed as that saint (common sense, piety and good taste are assumed). See the flyer for more info.
- TUESDAY NIGHT SCRIPTURE STUDY GROUP: You are invited to attend a scripture study group, which will meet at Gretchen McPherson's home, 6063 Elsa Ave, Rohnert Park CA 94928, on Tuesday evenings, 7 PM, starting Nov. 3. Deacon Nicholas Carr will guide us through the Epistle to the Hebrews.
- THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK distribution will take place on Wednesday, November 11. Volunteers: please try to arrive by at 5 PM.
- ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, following Vespers, there will be a potluck, followed by a talk by Vincent Rossi on St. Paisius, the 18th century compiler of the Russian and Romanian editions of the Philokalia.
- HOLY MYSTERIES: Alexander DeMaar, a new parishioner in our community, and his fiancé, Keri Quinn from LA, will be united by God in Holy Matrimony on Sunday, November 8 at 2 PM. Theodore Joseph Rossi, newborn son of Gabriel and Maya Rossi, will be baptized in St. Seraphim Church on Saturday, November 14 at 10 AM. Kathleen Rhodes, Spencer Seraphim's mother, will become a catechumen after Vespers on Saturday, October 31.
- WE WELCOME BACK TO SANTA ROSA Esmee Elisabeta Lafleur. She's currently looking for a place or room to rent; if you hear of anything available, let the parish office know (707-584-9491) or email Fr. Lawrence.
- THE SENIOR/RETIRED LUNCH will be held on Thursday, Nov 12th: Matushka Esther Carr will be preparing our early Thanksgiving meal of turkey with chutney and mashed potatoes and mint peas. The rest of us are to bring our specialty side dishes, dessert and/or drinks.
- THE NATIVITY FAST is forty days long. It begins on November 15, ends on Nativity. You know what to do!
- PARISH COUNCIL: Our meeting will take place on Thursday, November 19, at 7 PM.
- ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 26 AT ABOUT 6 PM, the Parish will welcome guests coming with the Redwood Gospel Mission NOMADIC SHELTER project. Our parish volunteers will provide a Thanksgiving dinner, a meditation on the Gospel, some light musical entertainment, and a warm and safe place to sleep (the RGM brings clean and bedbug-free mats). The Nomadic Shelter is a program in which the Redwood Gospel Mission of Santa Rosa has partnered with thirty local church communities—each taking one night a month for the next four months—to provide a safe place for prescreened homeless folks (many of them women and children) to be brought by the Mission for the night. Arrival is expected about 6 PM, departure about 6:30 AM. Mission staff and parish volunteers will stay the night to care for the guests. We will also host guests on Christmas Eve, December 24 (in honor of the cave in Bethlehem), January 28, February 25 and March 24. Any questions about volunteering should be directed to the parish coordinator of the program, Ambrose Ryan Inlow, at (707) 490-4700.
- THIRD ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER PROJECT: Help provide Thanksgiving dinner for 50 Sonoma County Families living in poverty. \$100.00 provides for a full Thanksgiving Dinner Food Box. If you, or your family, are not able to sponsor a full box, please consider sharing a box with other church members! In an effort to make this charity effort efficient we will be accepting monetary donations only (checks can be made out to St. Seraphim Church/charity). This effort is extremely appreciated and impactful. If you have any questions you can contact Amy Ramirez Margitich at fosasquatch@gmail.com or Serge Anderson at s.anderson4990@sbcglobal.net.

NOVEMBER 21~ Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. As the righteous parents of the Holy three-year old Virgin Mary prepared to take Her to the temple, they first dressed Her in royal garments, adorned Her, and provided Her with an escort of maidens carrying lighted candles. So should we, in order to enter the Heavenly Realm, first clothe our souls in the garment of obedience to the Lord's commandments, adorn our souls with virtues, and accompany them with the lighted candles of prayer and charity.

Vespers on Friday 6:15 PM on November 20; Matins/Divine Liturgy 8:30 AM, November 21.

Commentary: The Trisagion Hymn

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

THE SOLEMN SINGING of the Trisagion—the “thrice-holy hymn” praising the Most Holy Trinity—is one of the most ancient our Orthodox Divine Liturgy hymns (not counting psalms). The story told about the origin of this hymn connects it to an earthquake that shook Constantinople sometime in the mid-fifth century. The earthquake proved catastrophic and people gathered in the streets and began praying, asking God to have mercy on them, singing *Kyrie Eleison* — “Lord, Have Mercy.” During this tragedy a small boy came forward and said that he had heard in a vision the hymn of the angels gathered around the throne of God, singing: *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us*. According to the Prophet Isaiah, this hymn is sung by the angels: *I saw the Lord setting on a throne...above it stood seraphim...and one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’* (Isaiah 6:1-5). By the end of the sixth century, the Trisagion had been incorporated into the text of the Liturgy. Today, the Trisagion also constitutes the last part of the Great Doxology at Matins and serves as well as part of the morning and evening prayers.

In the Orthodox tradition the Trisagion is primarily understood as a hymn to the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, His Son coeternal with Him and His Holy Spirit, also of the same essence. This trinitarian teaching is best summed up in a Vespers hymn written by the Emperor Leo the Wise (866-912 AD) for the feast of Pentecost:

Come, O people, let us worship the Godhead in three Persons: the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit. The Father timelessly begets the co-reigning and co-eternal Son, the Holy Spirit was in the Father glorified equally with the Son, one power, one substance, one Godhead. In worshipping Him let us say: Holy God: Who made all things through the Son, with the cooperation of the Spirit. Holy Mighty: through Whom we know the Father; through Whom the Holy Spirit came into the world. Holy Immortal: the Comforting Spirit; proceeding from the Father and resting in the Son. O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee.

What does this famous hymn imply? First, it signifies that the God whom we worship is completely, totally and utterly transcendent. This is what is meant when we say that “God is holy.” The one, true and living God stands outside the created universe of time and space as we know it. God is beyond all conception and understanding of existence, and because of this we can never fully grasp Him intellectually. God is, as the Liturgy will later say in

one of its prayers—ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible, beyond understanding. For this reason, the one God, Whom we know as Father from the Son, is not and should never be pictured as an old, white-bearded man sitting on a throne. This utterly transcendent and holy God, the Creator, Whom we cannot even begin to comprehend, has chosen to reveal Himself to us as complete and total Love, Truth, Light and Life in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—Christ: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

Secondly, to call God thrice-holy implies His absolute purity. The holiness of God calls forth from our hearts deep repentance which leads to the cleansing and purification of the heart (nous), and the consecration of one’s life in love to Him. “Be holy because I, the Lord thy God, is holy” (Leviticus 19:2). In the Sermon on the Mount, after the Lord Jesus tells us to love even our enemies, He concludes by issuing, in essence, the same challenge: “Be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). This call by God for us to share in and reflect His holiness is the fundamental axiom of the Christian life.

Thirdly, because the Trisagion is based on the hymn of the angels, St Nicholas Cabasilas (1319–1391 AD) comments that in singing the Trisagion during the Liturgy human beings and angels form one Church and one choir. During the celebration of the Liturgy, heaven and earth intersect, and our worship here becomes participation in the worship going on around the throne of God in heaven (Revelation 4:1–10). He wrote: *The Thrice-holy Hymn has been taken in part from the angels, and in part from Book of Psalms by the Prophet David; it was made into one hymn by the Church of Christ and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The holy, which is sung three times, belongs to the angels (cf. Isa. 6:3), while God, mighty and immortal come from the blessed David, who says: My soul thirsts for God, the mighty, the living (Ps. 41:3). Our holy church received all this and joined the psalm with the angelic hymn and added the petition, Have mercy on us... in order to show both the harmony of the Old Testament with the New, and that angels and men form one Church and one choir.*

Elsewhere he wrote that *the Church...is the assembly of those who believe and profess the Trinity and Unity of God...That is why we sing this hymn after bringing in the Holy Gospel Book [at the ‘Little Entrance’]; it is as if we proclaim that He, by coming among us, has given us a place amid the angels and established us in the heavenly choir. —Borrowed*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - Holy Unmercenary Healers • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	2	3 • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home	4 - Kazan Icon Feast • <i>AT KAZAN SKETE:</i> 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers	5	6	7 • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, <i>Wedding Rehearsal</i>
8 - St. Michael the Archangel • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 2 PM, <i>Wedding*</i>	9	10 • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home	11 • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i> • 6 PM, Vespers	12 • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship (Turkey dinner!)	13	14 • 10 AM, Baptism of Theodore J. Rossi • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 4 PM, Readers Class • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, <i>Potluck and Lecture**</i>
15 - St. Paisius of Neamt*** • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Potluck • 40 Day Mem./Deacon Mark	16	17 • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home	18 • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers	19 • 7 PM, <i>Parish Council</i>	20 • 6:15 PM, <i>Great Vespers & Lity for the Entrance of the Theotokos</i>	21 Entrance of Theotokos • 8:30 AM, <i>Matins and Divine Liturgy</i> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers
22 - St. Cecilia of Rome • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	23	24	25 • 6 PM, Vespers	26 - Thanksgiving Day • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy & Akathist <i>Glory to God</i> • 5 PM, Nomadic Shelter	27	28 <i>No Catechism today</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
29 - Martyr Paramon • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, Vespers for St. Andrew the Apostle	30 - St. Andrew • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy / Memorial for Konstantin Sakovich	December 1 • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home	2 • 6 PM, Vespers	3 • 8 PM, <i>Cantiamo Christmas Concert</i>	4 • 8 PM, <i>Cantiamo Christmas Concert</i>	5 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, • 5 PM, Great Vespers for St. Nicholas

* Marriage of Alex DeMaar and Keri Weigle, Sunday, November 8 at 2 PM

** Saturday, Nov. 14 following Vespers: potluck and a talk by Vincent Rossi on St. Paisius (Velichkovsky) of Neamt

*** The Nativity Fast begins on November 15. We abstain from meat and dairy until Christmas Day.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

DECEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
NOV. 29 - Martyr Paramon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, Vespers for St. Andrew the Apostle 	30 - St. Andrew <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy / Memorial for Konstantin Sakovich 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 PM, <i>Cantianmo Christmas Concert</i> 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 PM, <i>Cantianmo Christmas Concert</i> 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Baptism of Blaise Inlow • 3:30 PM, Catechism, • 5 PM, Great Vespers for St. Nicholas
6 - St. Nicholas of Myra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	7	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, <i>Redwood Empire Food Bank</i> • 6 PM, Vespers 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Master Plan Meeting 	11	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers
13 - St. Herman of Alaska <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	14	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Scripture Study/McPherson home 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	18	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers
20 - Holy Ancestors of Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Potluck Agape • 4 PM, Prefeast Vespers • 4:30 PM, St. Nicholas Party 	21 - Prefeast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers 	22 - Prefeast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Prefeast Vespers 	23 - Prefeast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Royal Hours 	24 - Strict Fast Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy for Nativity • 6 PM, Matins • 6 PM, Nomadic Shelter 	25 - Christmas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for Nativity 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
27 - Protomartyr Stephen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal 	28	29	30	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Great Vespers for St. Basil, Circumcision of Christ 	JANUARY 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (St. Basil) • 5 PM, Vespers and Akathist for Saint Seraphim 	2 - St. Seraphim of Sarov <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers