

The Orthodox Christian Day of Prayers for the Environment

—by Ted Strat

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED to take good care of God's earth. This is the message of Scripture, the saints, and perhaps most eloquently the Patriarchs of the Orthodox churches speaking in one united voice. They call us to repent of whatever ways we have abused the earth and, in their words "we urge all the faithful to respect and protect the natural environment..."

This is not anything new. Christians from the beginning have had a duty to respect the earth. In the Book of Genesis, Adam and his successors are called to take dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26; 28), to replenish it (Gen 1:28), and to dress and keep it (Gen. 2:15). *Dominion* means to be like the Lord, and therefore to have the loving attitudes of the Lord. Dominion is thus a charge to treat the earth as the Lord would treat it, with care, service and concern for all that it is in it. The command to replenish (or fill) provides the biblical basis for recycling. This means as we take from the earth, we are to put back in proportion as we have taken. The word "dress," from the Hebrew *avad*, is to raise up, similar to the raising up of crops. In a global context it means we are to raise up the whole world. The word "keep," from the Hebrew *shamar*, means to protect from harm, particularly to hold off anything which might corrupt or defile or pollute the earth.

During the 1980s it became apparent that people were forgetting these ancient commands. In response His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch +Demitrios, Archbishop of Constantinople, issued a landmark letter in 1989 which he called *An Encyclical Letter on the Day of Protection of the Environment*.

His All-Holiness wrote: "The abuse by contemporary man of his privileged position in creation 'to have dominion over the earth' (Genesis 1.28) has led the world to the edge of apocalyptic self-destruction... Scientists and other men of learning warn us of the danger, and speak of "the phenomena of the greenhouse" which is threatening the life of our planet, whose first indications have already been noted.

"In view of this situation, the Church of Christ cannot remain unmoved. It constitutes a fundamental dogma of faith that the world was created by God... According to the great Fathers of the Church, Man was created to refer creation back to the Creator, in order that the world may be saved from decay and death.

"Unfortunately, in our days under the influence of extreme rationalism and self-centeredness, man has lost the sense of the sacredness of creation and acts as its arbitrary ruler and rude violator. Instead of the eucharistic and ascetic spirit with which the Orthodox Church brought up her children for centuries, we observe today a violation of nature for... man's endless and constantly increasing desires of lust, encouraged by the prevailing philosophy of the consumer society.

"But creation 'groans and travails in all its parts' (Romans 8.22), and is now beginning to protest at its treatment by human beings. Man cannot infinitely... exploit the natural world. The price of his arrogance will be his self-destruction, if the present situation continues.

"In full consciousness of our duty and paternal spiritual responsibility, having taken all the above into consideration and having listened to the anguish of modern man, we, together with the Sacred and Holy Synod surrounding us, declare the first day of September of each year...to be the day of the protection of the environment.

"Therefore, we invite through this Patriarchal Message the entire Christian world to offer together with the Mother Church of Christ (the Ecumenical Patriarchate) every year on this day prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as thanksgiving for the gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation. At the same time we paternally urge all the faithful of the world to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment, and on the other hand all those who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing the nations to act without delay, taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of the natural creation."

The following year, Ecumenical Patriarch +Demitrios issued a second letter. "A year has passed since we issued our message declaring September 1st as the day of prayers for protection of the environment. In that message we called the Orthodox faithful and every man and woman of good will to consider the serious problem generated as a result of the abuse of material creation by human beings. On this day, which for the Orthodox Church is the first day of the ecclesiastical year, the Orthodox faithful are invited to offer prayers to the Creator of all, thanking Him for the good of His creation and be-

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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
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seeking Him to protect it from every evil and destruction.

“Beloved brothers and spiritual children: Use the natural environment as its stewards and not as owners. Acquire an ascetic ethos, bearing in mind that everything in the natural world, whether great or small, has importance for the life of the world, and nothing is useless or contemptible. Regard yourselves as being responsible before God for every creature and treat everything with love and care. Only in this way shall we prevent the threatening destruction of our planet and secure a physical environment where life for the coming generations of humankind will be healthy and happy....”

In 1991 Patriarch Bartholomew succeeded Patriarch +Demetrios. His All Holiness convened a historic conference of Orthodox patriarchs. After several days of prayer and deliberation, they issued a joint statement on behalf of All the Canonical Churches. Their statement, abridged, follows:

“Gathered together in the Holy Spirit in consultation, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy 1992, by the initiative and invitation of the first among us, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, after the expressed will of other brother Primates, we, by the mercy of God, the Primates of the local Most Holy Patriarchates and Autocephalous and Autonomous Orthodox Churches [*the names of fourteen of the Patriarchs and Metropolitans of autocephalous churches are listed*] ...have conferred in brotherly love on matters preoccupying our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church and have concelebrated the Holy Eucharist....in the Patriarchal Church of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on this Sunday which for centuries has been dedicated to Orthodoxy. On this occasion

we wish to declare the following: “The Most Holy Orthodox Church... finds herself confronted with severe and urgent problems that she desires to face as one body... Moreover, we observe the following:

“The rapid progress of technology and the sciences...has not always been accompanied by analogous spiritual and ethical foundations... In social life, only a section of humanity accumulates the privileges of this progress and the power proceeding from it exacerbates the misfortune of other people and creates an impetus for agitation or even war...The co-existence of this progress with justice, love and peace is the only safe and sure road, so that this progress will not be transformed from a blessing into a curse in the millennium to come... Similar are the dangers for the survival of the natural environment. The careless and self-indulgent use of material creation by humanity, with the help of scientific and technological progress, has started to cause irreparable damage to the natural environment. Unable to remain passive in the face of such destruction, the Orthodox Church invites all the Orthodox to dedicate the first day of September of each year, the day of the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, to the offering of prayers and supplication for the preservation of God’s creation. The Church also entreats all the Orthodox to adopt the attitude to nature found in the Eucharist and to the ascetic traditions of the Church. This, in the love of the Lord, we proclaim on the Great and Holy Sunday of Orthodoxy, urging pious Orthodox Christians to be united around their pastors and calling all those who believe in Christ to reconciliation and solidarity in confronting the serious dangers threatening the world at this time. ‘May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.’”

THANKSGIVING PRAYERS

In order to observe September 1—the Liturgical New Year—as a day for prayer, thanksgiving and care for creation, the Akathist “Glory to God for All Things” will be served at 6 PM, on September 1.

On Sunday, Sept. 6, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a Service of Thanksgiving will be sung, as Vladyka Benjamin requested of all parishes in the Diocese of the West.

Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos (reposed 1989) on Pre-Marital Sex

THERE ARE MANY devout Christians who foster the question: If we make love five minutes before our wedding it is a sin, but if we make love five minutes after we are okay? This is exactly the nature and power and value of the Mysteries: to change things, to alter situations, to transform events, to make the sinner holy, to bless the forbidden, to raise the earthly to heaven.

“Five minutes” before the blessing of a priest we have on the Holy Altar “bread” and “wine”, but “five minutes (to the second) after” we have from this the divinized Body and Blood of our Lord! “Five minutes” before the baptism of catechumens it is a grave sin to convey to them the Divine Eucharist, but “five minutes after” the conveyance is an essential and holy act. “Five minutes” before his ordination as Bishop the “elect” remains a Presbyter and cannot celebrate the ordination of a Cleric, but “five minutes after” the continuation of his ordination in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy he can ordain Presbyters and Dea-

cons. But why should we remain in the divine and supernatural Mysteries of our Church? Perhaps “within our life”, that is our earthly life, there are similar parallels. “Five minutes” before the signing of a contract by a notary and the parties involved it is simply a paper, but “five minutes after” it remains an indisputable public document created with legal consequences (rights and obligations) sometimes to an unfathomable extent. “Five minutes” before the signing of a covenant it is no different than wrapping paper, but “five minutes after” it has the strength to determine the fate of hundreds of millions of assets. “Five minutes” before the inauguration of a President he is just an ordinary citizen devoid of any special power, but “five minutes after” he is given the power to dismiss the Government and dissolve the House. Yes, “five minutes” before marriage the carnal relations of a couple is a sin, and “five minutes after” it is not a sin.

PREPARATION FOR FREQUENT RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

HOW TO PREPARE for Holy Communion? Examine yourself, says St. Paul. This can mean many things. Examine your love for God (Do you pray, have you skipped Liturgy and other services?), your love for your neighbor and the practical ways in which you manifest that love; examine whether or not you love your enemies. Have you forgiven each person, and just as importantly, have you asked to be forgiven for your sins, whether new ones or ancient ones still on “your account?” Examine if you complain, if you have resentments or anger, if you swear, judge others in thought, word and deed; if you give thanks to God daily, to ask for His divine mercy and help. In order to give yourself some self-discipline, which helps one to avoid sin and demonstrates obedience to the Lord and not the belly,

abstain from meat and dairy on Wednesdays and Fridays (Truly, it is not so difficult!); keep a total fast from midnight Saturday until Communion on Sunday. As for prayer: yes, daily prayer is critical. Pray the ***Prayers before Communion*** in the prayer book during the week. Certainly confess ***at least once a month***, and more frequently if sins weigh on your conscience. Read the Holy Scriptures regularly, so you may be familiar with the Savior’s words. Trust in Jesus Christ and the Church and the teachings of the Church—which is His Body. “Take, eat: this is My Body which is broken for you, for the remission of sins. Drink of it, ***all of you***: this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sin.” —*Fr. Lawrence*

YOUNG ADULT GROUP FORMING:

A distressing trend among youth today is a failure to remain in the Church after high school and college. In response, St. Seraphim’s is launching a new young adult group (so far we don’t have a name for it). The purpose of this group is to provide a stronger foundation for our parish youth as they navigate through life after high school, and provide some help to counter the wayward trend. Activities will focus around communal meals, discussion of challenges in Orthodox Christian life, retreats, and service work for the parish and outside it. The first gathering is on Saturday, **SEPTEMBER 12th in the Parish Hall after Great Vespers**. Dinner will be served: “Build your own pizza” and drinks will be provided. Content will be an introduction to the group and planning of future events. All between ages 18-22 are welcome! If you have any questions, please speak to or call:

- Joe Anderson at (707) 888-2860
- Tyler-Rose Counts at (510) 414-2122
- Alicia Krueger at (707) 360-8535



GLENDI is September 19 and 20

GLENDI WORK PARTIES: There will be at least two work parties for setting up booths, parking, shade, electrical, the stage, etc. Mark your calendars for **9 AM–1 PM, Saturday, September 5 and 12.**

The day before Glendi, September 18, there will be an all day work party: cooking, cleaning, erecting, fencing, placing signs, arranging and lugging! Please see Fr. Lawrence or Alexander Stameroff to let him know you'll be present.

Booth Sign Up Sheets are in the Parish hall.

There will be a *Glendi Organizational Meeting* on Tuesday, September 8 at 6 PM. All are invited. If you questions, concerns and or ideas please come and share them. We do need staff present from the Gyro, Kabob, Lamb and Kitchen booths.

Please note that Great Vespers on Saturday, September 19 will be at 4 PM. Divine Liturgy on Sunday, September 20 at 9 AM. The choir will sing a candlelight concert on Saturday, at 7:30 PM.

On Glendi Sunday: following the Divine Liturgy we ask you—kindly—to park your cars in the Glendi parking field, rather than on the church property.

The Glendi Parking crew is looking for a chalking device, the kind used at little league baseball fields to mark the base-lines. Please see Thom Stewart if you have access to one of these items.

The Indoor GLENDI Bakery relies heavily on a myriad of donated homemade items that give our customers a wide variety from which to choose. We are asking that you make your favorite sweets to help supply our Bakery! Special cakes and quick breads always sell well too, as does anything unique like rum or carrot cake. Please make enough for Saturday and Sunday, and package separately for each day. We need things in/on disposable containers whenever possible, or mark your name clearly on the container. Please contact Kristine Tellefsen—Chair, Inside Bakery—by email: kristinet@sonic.net to let her know what you are bringing. We need all the baked goods no later than 9 AM on September 19th.

The Spiritual Life Is Something That Someone Else Gives To Us

A BASIC CONDITION for the spiritual life is that we should understand that, on our own, we can do absolutely nothing. No matter how hard we try, the spiritual life is something that someone else gives to us.

And the “someone else” is the Spirit of God, the Comforter, the “treasury of good things and the giver of life”, the treasury from which all the riches of spirituality come forth, the source from which the spiritual life emerges and overflows.

Of course, sometimes we get confused, and think that to be spiritual means to be a “good person:” not to steal, not to kill, not to go to bad places or with bad friends, to go to Church on Sunday, to read spiritual books, and so on. But no, this is not the spiritual life. A spiritual person, a true Christian, is someone whose entire life is sworn to God. Initially by means of his baptism, and later, in his heart, such a person swears an oath to God, to live for God, and to remain with God forever. A spiritual person is an athlete who has burst into life, who stands out from the crowds of human beings, and runs with all the speed of his soul to heaven.

A spiritual person is one who with shining eyes and chest thrust forward, has set his course and races to heaven. He is not a “good man.” A spiritual person knows that, in order to succeed, he needs strong wings: the wings of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual person must therefore do everything possible to attract, to win over, the Spirit of God, because only the Holy Spirit, God himself, has the gifts of the spiritual life. According to St Gregory of Nyssa, the “distribution of the royal gifts” of the Holy Spirit takes place in the Church through the Sacraments.

—Elder Aimilianos of Mount Athos



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CONGRATULATIONS:** Many Years and all of God's blessings to Mica and Tito: their daughter Katia was born August 28.
- **THE PARISH MEN'S GROUP** is on a field trip this Sunday to St. Tikhon's in SF (was St. John's home) and then a Giants' baseball game.
- **FR. JOHN AND MATUSHKA XENIA** will be on vacation from September 2–16 or so. May the Lord bless their time with peace and good weather!
- **CONFESSION TIME:** With Fr. John away on vacation there will be limited opportunity for making a Confession on Sunday morning. You are encouraged to come for Confession on Saturday (or by appointment during the week), before, during or after Great Vespers—which is in general a better time.
- **PRISCA KAREN ROSELLE** is recovering at Golden Living Rehab at 101 Monroe, Petaluma, CA. Her phone is (510) 735-1306. She would appreciate visitors.
- **PICNIC TABLES NEEDED:** Glendi needs two or three new picnic tables to replace those that are deteriorating. Please see Fr. Lawrence or Bobbi Griovski if you would like to help us locate and purchase the kind of tables we need or if you would like to donate one or two.
- **MATUSHKA ANN** thanks all those that participated in the garden clean up on Saturday, August 22.
- **THE AUGUST CALENDAR** showed a Liturgy at 7 AM on Tuesday, Sept. 1. That Liturgy is moved to Wednesday, Sept. 2, at 7 AM because there is already a Liturgy on Monday at the Kazan Skete at 9:30 AM on Sept. 1.
- **SEPTEMBER IS A MONTH OF FEASTS:** The first major Feast of the Liturgical Year, not surprisingly, is that of the Birth of the Mother of God on September 8 (nine months after her conception on December 9). Please consult the calendar. The second Feast of the year is that of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross, September 14, which commemorates the finding of the True Cross in Jerusalem, by St. Helen. The wonderful hymns of the Vigil service present a panorama in song and prophetic psalms of the meaning and power of the Cross of Christ. Consult the calendar for service times.
- **THE TEACHERS** of our Parish Sunday school will have a meeting/discussion on Thursday, September 10 at 7 PM, in the Parish Hall.
- **FILIP SVANE**, son of Matushka Hanne and Father Theodor, will be baptized on Sunday, September 27 at 9 AM.
- **PARISH FEAST DAY:** God willing, we will celebrate the 79th anniversary of our Parish on Thursday, October 1. The evening before, Sept. 30, we will serve the Vigil for the Feast of the Protection of the Holy Virgin (in St. Seraphim Church) at 6:15 PM, and the following morning, the Divine Liturgy, in the Protection Church. We are expecting either Archbishop Benjamin or Bishop Daniel, or perhaps both. Following the Liturgy there will be a festal meal in the parish hall.
- **THE PRESS DEMOCRAT** has a nice tribute to Byron Paul Burch, who reposed on August 20 (funeral was here on August 24). Memory Eternal.

ORTHODOX INSTITUTE 2015

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BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

ADULT EDUCATION

KEYNOTE
Kevin Allen,
"Adult Education is
Crucial to the Parish"

SPEAKERS

Dr. Anton Vrame, Fr. Josiah Trenham, Fr. Stephen Freeman,
Gerry Clonaris, Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick, Fr. John Oliver

REGISTER NOW!

Step 1: Register for the event at www.antiochian.org/OI2015
Step 2: Register for meals & lodging at www.antiochianvillage.org/conferences-meetings/events

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation...

– Hebrews 6:1

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 - CHURCH NEW YEAR • 6 PM, Akathist: <i>Glory to God for all Things</i>	2 • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers	3	4	5 • 9 AM, <i>Glendi Work Party</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
6 - St. Maxim (Sandovich) • 10 AM, Liturgy and Prayer of Thanksgiving for Creation • Noon, Agape Meal	7 • 6:15 PM, Great Vespers for Nativity of the Theotokos	8 • 8:30 AM, Matins and Divine Liturgy for Nativity of the Theotokos • 6 PM, Glendi Org Meeting	9 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank distribution • 6 PM, Vespers	10 [Fr. Lawrence in Calistoga at Monastery hearing confessions] • 7 PM, Church School Teacher Meeting	11	12 • 9 AM, <i>Glendi Work Party</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Young Adult Group Dinner
13 - Forefeast of Exaltation • 10 AM, Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, Vespers for the Exaltation of the Cross*	14 - Strict Fast Day • 8:30 AM, Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Cross*	15 <div>Glendi Set Up Week</div>	16 • 6 PM, Vespers	17	18 <i>Glendi Prep all day: grounds, Hall, kitchen</i>	19 - Glendi: 11 AM-9 PM • 8 AM, Prep • 11 AM, Glendi opens • 4 PM, Great Vespers • 7:30 PM, Choir Concert
20 - Glendi Day • 9 AM, Liturgy (note time) • Glendi opens at Noon (Please move your car to the field after Liturgy)	21 • 9:30 AM, at Kazan Skete, Divine Liturgy & Panikhida for Sakovich family • Glendi Clean up	22 • Glendi Clean up [Fr L in SF at Deanery Meeting, all day]	23 • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy (Conception of St. John) • 6 PM, Vespers	24	25	26 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for St. John the Evangelist • 4 PM, Panikhida • 5 PM, Great Vespers
27 - St. Anthimos • 9 AM, Baptism of Filip Svane • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	28	29	30 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Protection of the Theotokos	OCTOBER 1 <i>Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos</i> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Festal meal to follow	2	3 • 5 PM, Great Vespers

* Revised calendar as of 9/8/15