

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

February 2021, Vol. 29, Issue 2

LIGHT AND UNBURDENED

The outward life of a person, what he or she has, does and came from, while of the utmost importance, is secondary to the inner life of a person. When the outward things, hopes, accomplishments and dreams are not fulfilled as dreamed and planned, then what is left for that man or woman? Some of us don't spiritually mature past a Sunday School experience of God, and when the waves of life pound; when temptations come, we might misconstrue them as something normal; when our faith is tested by inner and outward opposition, *as it will be*, we might blame God or the Church or some person, and then look elsewhere for help—ignorant of the incredible spiritual power of prayer, the Holy Mysteries, church services and spiritual guidance. Help indeed! "The Lord is my strength and my song, He has become my salvation." (Ps. 117:14).

We want to be strong and mature, but perhaps we have forgotten a basic principle of the *Life in Christ*, the words of the Lord to St Paul: *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* Embracing our weaknesses in the spirit of repentance (turning towards God) we then sense the presence and peace of the Savior within the heart, which no one can take away. "These earthly misfortunes do not separate us from God if we are seeking him sincerely" (*Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev*) Allow me to offer you some suggestions:

Each and every day, find a little time to be alone and quiet, not engaging in the thoughts that appear like "[monkeys leaping from branch to branch.](#)" Then, turn your attention to prayer: short, heartfelt and attentive. Read the Holy Scriptures as part of prayer.

Keep your conscience clear by self-examination, and come confess and receive Absolution of sins.

Keep the Wednesday and Friday fasts. These simple fast days give us a much needed rhythm and focus as well as a reminder of the saving acts of the Lord.

Come and receive Holy Communion.

Come to the Church during the week to pray, when there are no services and when it is quiet. I am very happy to unlock the Cathedral or the Protection Church for anyone that wants to pray.

Make some effort to stay in touch with others at

Church by phone, text or email.

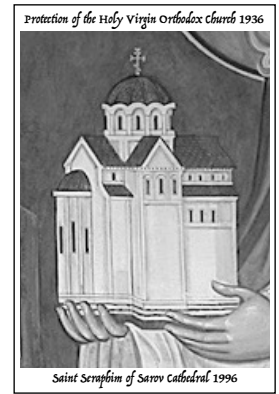
These are obvious things to do. Experience shows that done with faith in the Savior, with repentance, eventually the soul begins to quiet down, becoming unburdened by sins and by inner noise and negativity. Give it time, give it your heart. We are impatient people, and forget that just as we do not get in great physical shape after exercising once or twice, neither do we grow spiritually without regular and contact with our Savior. Without that contact, communion, the inner life of a person, the "batteries of the soul," are depleted by cares, anxieties, sins and fears. Don't delay in asking God to restore and refresh you, to give you peace of heart. —*Fr. Lawrence*

LET US ATTEND

Make the effort to raise up, or rather, to enclose your mind within the words of your prayer; and if, like a child, it gets tired and falters, raise it up again. The mind, after all, is naturally unstable, but the God Who can do everything can also give it firm endurance. Persevere in this, therefore, and do not grow weary; and He Who sets a boundary to the sea of the mind will come to you too during your prayer and will say, "Thus far you shall come, and no farther" (Job 38:11). Spirit cannot be bound, but where He is found everything yields to the Creator of spirit. —[On Prayer - Step 28](#), *St. John Climacus*

GOD GUIDES HIS CHURCH

I have to listen to complaints about the fact that we are now going through difficult times, that now free rein is given to all kinds of heretical and godless teachings, that the Church is being subjected to the attacks of enemies from all sides and that it will become terrible for Her, that these murky waves of unbelief and heresy are overcoming Her. I always answer, "Don't worry! Don't be afraid for the Church! She will not perish: the gates of hell will not prevail against Her, right to the Dread Judgment itself. Do not fear for Her but for yourself—that's what you have to fear for, and it's true that our times are very difficult. Why? Because *now* it is especially easy to fall away from Christ, and then—perish." —*St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845-1913)*



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- THE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING is to be held, according to our parish by-laws, on the first Sunday of February. For obvious reasons, this year's meeting will be postponed. The Parish Council preferred to NOT have the meeting over Zoom, but to wait until we can be together. Per usual, a booklet with financial and organizational reports will be distributed in the next week. Our Parish Council Members have all agreed to continue serving until such time as we can hold elections.
- CHRISTINA DeMichele sent in the following request: She is looking for a live-in caregiver for her father Henry, in exchange for room and board and an allowance. She would prefer a man. The job is not 24/7, but mostly at night. Any help would be greatly appreciated! Call Christina (707-480-0024) if you have any contacts for her.
- HOUSE BLESSINGS CONTINUE: please call Fr. Lawrence to schedule (707-584-9491).
- THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK distribution will take place on Wednesday, February 10 and 24. Volunteers are asked to arrive by 4 PM.
- DIVINE LITURGIES will be served on three Wednesdays this month: Feb. 10—Feast of St. Haralambos; 17—St. Theodore the Recruit; 24—Finding of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist.
- PARISH WORK PARTY, Saturday, Feb. 13, 9 AM–Noon. Tasks: Clean gutters on Protection Church, clean up area behind kitchen, replace wood on the large birch tree planter behind the Hall, scrub baptismal font, replan the basketball hoop glass, etc.
- THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT, also known as “Meat Fare” is March 7. Forgiveness Sunday is March 14. Holy Week is April 26–30, with Pascha on May 2. An abbreviated Vespers of Forgiveness will be served immediately after the Divine Liturgy on March 14. Obviously, we will still ask one another to forgive and just as importantly, assure the other person of forgiveness. Instead of a kiss of peace, we will make a bow or prostration before one another.
- CONFESSIONS: Fridays, 11:30 AM–1 PM; Saturdays, before, during and after Vigil; Tues–Thurs., afternoons by appointment; by telephone, by appointment. Those who receive Holy Communion each week are asked to make their confession at least monthly.

THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD ~ February 2

In today's Gospel (for the [Feast of the Meeting](#), see [Luke 2:22ff](#)) we...hear about Symeon, a man just and devout, who received from the Holy Spirit the promise that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. What is important for us to know is that Symeon grew old in the temple, waiting for this promise to be fulfilled without faintheartedness. In his person, we see a very significant aspect for our life, namely the aspect of time. Time and waiting with patience for the promise of the Lord is very important, because it makes us more humble. Waiting patiently, not desiring to quickly acquire the promise, but devoting years, decades of his life longing for the promise of God—all this humbles the heart of man and makes him more like unto the One Whom he is about to receive—Christ.

Another very important aspect is that Symeon received the promise of the Lord with great gratitude: As soon as he received Christ in his arms, he immediately exploded in a hymn of praise to God: *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.* The gratitude with which he received Christ in his arms attracted the spirit of prophecy in Symeon and then he prophesied to the Mother of God: He becomes a collaborator with God in revealing the divine will to the Mother of God. He speaks about the sign of Christ, that this Child is *set for the fall and the rising of many*, and then he turns to the Mother of God saying, *A sword will pierce through your soul, also.* Therefore, the gratitude with which he receives Christ in his arms drew upon him the spirit of prophecy and established him in the realm of the divine will, which he revealed to the Mother of God. Thus, we learn that when we receive the gifts of God with gratitude, this gratitude attracts a greater blessing upon us; it makes us ministers of the mystery of God and gives us the gift of being collaborators with Him in revealing His truths even to our fellow men.

The [Meeting of the Lord](#) is a feast of the Lord, but also a feast of the Mother of God. Today we see that she gives Christ to Symeon, and this is a power, an authority that she always has. The Mother of God is always this bridge through which we can receive Christ. It is the Mother of God who gave to [St. Silouan](#) the rare gift of unceasing prayer: As he was praying before her icon, the prayer came out from the icon, went into his heart, and remained with him unto the end of his life. —*excerpt of a sermon by Elder Zacharia of Essex*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January 31 – Sts Cyrus and John <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Vigil 	2 – Meeting of the Lord <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Candles 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Scripture Study 	4	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
7 – St. Parthenios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy 	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Men’s Fellowship at Firepit 	9	10 – St. Haralambos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Scripture Study 	11	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Parish Work Party • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
14 – Zacchaeus Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy 	15	16	17 – St. Theodore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Scripture Study 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
21 – Publican and Pharisee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy 	22 – Fast Free Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Men’s Fellowship at Firepit 	23	24 – St. John the Baptist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 4 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Scripture Study 	25	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Holy Baptism</i> • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
28 – Prodigal Son <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy 	March 1	2	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Scripture Study 	4	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confession 	6 – Memorial Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Holy Chrismation</i> • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 - Prodigal Son • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy	March 1	2	3	4	5	6 - Memorial Saturday • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Holy Chrismation</i> • 5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
7 - Meat-Fare Sunday • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy	8 Meat Fast begins • 7 PM, Men's Fellowship at Firepit	9	10	11	12	13
14 - Forgiveness Sunday • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Vespers of Forgiveness	15 - Clean Monday • 8 AM, Matins • 7 PM, Great Compline/Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	16 - Clean Tuesday • 8 AM, Matins • 7 PM, Great Compline/Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	17 - Clean Wednesday • 8 AM, Canon of St. Andrew • 6:15 PM, Presanctified	18 - Clean Thursday • 8 AM, Matins • 7 PM, Great Compline/Canon of St. Andrew of Crete	19 - Clean Friday • 10 AM, Presanctified/Canon to St. Theodore the Recruit • 6 PM, Akathist	20
21 - Sunday of Orthodoxy • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy with Icon Procession to follow	22	23	24	25 - Annunciation	26 - St. Gabriel	27
28 - St. Gregory Palamas • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy	29	30	31 - St. Innocent of Alaska	April 1	2	3
		• 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Vespers for the Feast of St. Innocent	• 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanctified	• 8 AM, Matins	• 8 AM, Matins • 11:30 AM-1:30 PM, Confession • 6 PM, Presanctified	• 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Holy Chrismation</i> • 5 PM, Vigil for the Veneration of the Cross