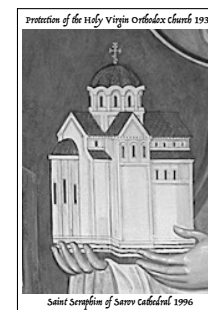


ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



February 18, 2024

Sunday of Zacchaeus



- RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION, Tone Four:
When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the angel the joyous message of the Resurrection, / they cast away the ancestral curse, / and elatedly told the Apostles: / death is overthrown, / Christ God is risen, / granting the world great mercy.
- RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION, Tone Four:
My Savior and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. / He has shattered the gates of hades, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day!

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Friday, Feb. 16: 11:30 AM–1 PM, Confessions
- Saturday, Feb. 17: 5 PM, Great Vespers / Confessions
- Sunday, Feb. 18: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Oath of Office for New Council Members

An Honest Prayer: Lord, I know that even my asking for spiritual enlightenment is mostly a lie, as my motivations are so mixed.... Nevertheless, hear my words, O Lord, divorced from all the falseness with which I say them. And Lord, I am not closing my eyes as I pray this, nor scrunching up my face and emotions with spirituality, as if on my own I could change myself, or as if, having made this awesome scrunchy-faced effort, it won't be my fault when you don't answer this prayer for my renewal. Rather, I am genuinely accepting that I don't know what precisely would have to change in me for me to love you more. This unknown change, which you do know, is what I pray for: I pray against myself. Amen. — *Timothy Patitsas*

A few tasks to do here: Clean the Baptismal Font; Polish the brass candle-stands; Fill pot-holes.

SAVE THE DATE! Teen Event

- * **Who:**St. Seraphim teens who are current 8th–12th graders
- * **What:**Northern CA Bay Area OCA teen gathering
- * **Where:**San Francisco, Holy Trinity Cathedral
- * **When:**Sunday, February 25, 2024 at 2 PM. Carpools will depart St. Seraphim around 12:45)
- * **Why:**Fun and fellowship with teen parishioners—Activity to be determined soon. Please contact Vicky Basch at 707-291-2369 with questions and to let us know if your teen plans to attend. Parents of teens are also welcomed to attend (it's a nice fellowship time for parents too).

Please register to attend the workshop
Death and Dying: Being Prepared on Saturday, March 2.
You can pre-register using this QR Code.



Noon, Agape Meal
12:30 PM, Mentoring

- Wednesday, Feb. 21: 5:30 PM, Akathist to Matushka Olga
6 PM, Vespers
6:30 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Thurs., Feb. 22: 7 PM, Online Bible Study with Fr James
- Fri., Feb. 23: 11:30–1 PM, Confessions

The Oath of Office for our newly-elected parish council members will take place on Sunday, February 18 at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. *The next Parish Council Meeting is on Wed., Feb. 21 at 6:30 PM.*

Catechism begins on Saturday, February 24 at 3:30 PM in the Parish Hall. This second semester we will study the Sacraments of the Church: Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Confession, Priesthood, Marriage, Unc-tion and the “Sacrament of Death” and the Funeral. All are welcome.

On Sunday afternoon, March 17 at 1 PM, we begin the Great Fast with *Forgiveness Sunday Vespers*, called that because at the conclusion of the brief Vespers, while the choir quietly sings Lenten and Paschal hymns, we ask and give forgiveness—one to another. I have no doubt that **every parishioner** will be present at this unique, once-a-year-Vespers of mutual forgiveness, during which we will all begin the journey to Pascha together. Mark your calendars now. —*Fr. Lawrence*

How can we begin to pray? Just by beginning. But how to begin, with what sort of methods? Everyone’s way will be different, but the saints give two absolute rules: be brief, and be regular. These are the pillars of prayer. *Brevity* to ensure humility, to discourage despair, and to enable us to do what can reasonable be done. And *regularity* to build the rhythm of prayer into the rhythm of life as an unchanging element of our existence. It is a million times more effective and pleasing to God to have a short rule of prayer rigidly kept at regular times than to “do a lot” just any old time, whenever we happen to do it. Suppose we cannot—or will not—be regular in prayer, not even with the shortest of rules? Is everything lost? Not at all. In this case we are told by our saints to take a small prayer or just a few words (like the *Jesus Prayer*, or “Lord, have mercy,” or a line from a Psalm) and to say it as often as we can, whenever or wherever we happen to be. Anyone can do

this, as it requires nothing but to do it, and it can lead us to union with God. “Remembrance of God” is the purpose of prayer—to “walk in His presence,” to “stand before His Face,” to be conscious of His Spirit in us making us His children. Remembrance of God is the way to keeping His commandments, and doing His commandments is our salvation and life. What about sweet feelings, consolations, comforts, visions, images, sentiments, emotions, graces of special sort...? Forget them all! They are not the purpose of prayer, not the purpose of Christian faith. If God wants to give them to us, we will get them. But we must not seek them or look for them. We must reject and doubt them if we think that we have them. This is the doctrine of the Orthodox saints. For faithful prayer has one singular goal: to allow us to accomplish God’s will. Prayer is in no way separated from good works and social action. When prayer is perfect and we see the Face of God in communion with Him in the depths of the Trinity, He shows us two things: He shows us Christ’s Cross and our brother. True prayer teaches us, as the Elder St. Silouan of Mount Athos has said, that “our brother is our life.” There is no touching God, no genuine prayer, which does not directly result for the one who prays in the sufferings of Christ for the love of creation. If we are not willing to do the commandments of Christ and to take radical decisions and actions toward God, ourselves, others, and the very world we live in, then we had better not even begin to pray. For in prayer, God will push us to do things, things our natural man might not want to do. To dare pray (as one Church father put it) and not to do what prayer will demand of us is to court insanity. If we are not ready to “put up” in our life, we had better “shut up” in our prayer. “It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). —*Fr. Thomas Hopko*

Keep our Catechumens in your prayers: Stephanie, Duke, James, Roxanne, Liliana, Skylar, William, Sadik, David, Joseph, Jackson, Dallas, Noah, Frances Ann, Gigi Williams, Raymond, Aly, Faye, Emily, Phacelia...*make them worthy in due season of the washing of regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and the robe of incorruption. Unite them to thy holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church, and number them with thy elect flock, that with us they may glorify thine all honorable and majestic Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...*

Participation at Vespers on Saturday evening is the Church’s wonderful gift of evening prayer and fellowship which ushers us into the Lord’s Day, in which we celebrate His death, resurrection and ascension, and our salvation. It is an important (essential?) part of preparing for Holy Communion.