

**Forgiveness Sunday Vespers**—Feb. 22 at 1 PM—ushers us into Great Lent. Vespers begins as usual, with the reading of Psalm 103, the Great Litany, and the various hymns of the day. After “O Joyous Light” we will sing the Lenten hymn, “Turn not Thy countenance from Thy servant, for I am afflicted, hearken to me speedily, attend to my soul, and deliver it.” From that point on we are in Great Lent, and the choir will be singing the Lenten melodies for the litanies during weekdays. At the end of this unique Service we will ask forgiveness of each other, each person approaching the priests, then each other. Those who can, do a prostration before one another; those who cannot, simply ask forgiveness. We say: “forgive me” and answer back, “forgive me. God forgives.” The important thing is to ask for forgiveness and then give it. In a parish—and the longer you are in it the more this is true—there are things to forgive which we will not recall or understand. I urge you all to attend this Vespers and participate in it, since Lent cannot really begin without it. Here is a [brief reflection](#) on this day by Fr Alexander Schmemmann. —*Fr. Lawrence*

**Many thanks to those** who attended the Annual Meeting last Sunday. We congratulate the new parish council members.

**By the time Lent begins**, Fr Daniel, Fr Nicholas and I will have blessed about one hundred homes. If your home did not get blessed, we will be honored to do that either on a Sunday afternoon of Lent (if possible) or after Pascha. Please let us know. We are honored to come. —*Fr Lawrence*

## Blini Brunch

*Complete with sour cream, lox, herring,  
and caviar...and of course, butter, syrup, fruit and bacon!!*

**Church Hall  
Sunday, February 15, Noon**

*Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that  
wonderful time of Lent.*

# ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL

## PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ORTHODOX CHURCH



**February 8, 2026**

Sunday of the Parable of the Prodigal Son



- TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION, Tone Two:  
When Thou didst descend to death, O Life-Immortal, Thou didst slay hades with the splendor of Thy Godhead; and when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of Heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to Thee.
- TROPARION OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD, Tone One:  
Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from thee hath risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, also thou righteous Elder, as thou receivest in thine arms the Redeemer of our souls, who also granteth unto us the Resurrection.
- KONTAKION OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Tone Three:  
Foolishly I sprang away from Thy great fatherly glory and dispersed in wicked deeds the riches that Thou didst give me. With the Prodigal I therefore cry unto Thee now: I have sinned against Thee, O compassionate Father. But receive me in repentance; and make me as one of Thy hired servants, O Lord.

## ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, Feb. 7: 10 AM, *Calistoga*, Bishop Vasily to lead retreat  
3:30 PM, Class for Catechumens and Inquirers, on the *Sacrament of Holy Baptism*  
5 PM, Vigil / Confessions
- Sunday, Feb. 8: 8 AM, Divine Liturgy  
9:40 AM, Reception of Catechumens  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
11:30 AM, Church School  
Noon, Agape Meal
- Wed., Feb. 11: 5:30 PM, Akathist to Matushka Olga  
6 PM, Vespers  
6:30 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Thurs., Feb. 12: 5:30 PM, *Smokey Thursday BBQ*/Men's Fellowship  
7 PM, Bible Study online with Fr James
- Friday, Feb. 13: 11:30 AM–1:30 PM, Confessions
- Saturday, Feb. 14: 9 AM, Gardening Work Party  
3:30 PM, Class for Catechumens and Inquirers on *On Chrismation*  
4:30 PM, Panikhida for Memorial Saturday  
5 PM, Vigil / Confessions

**With thanks to God**, we will receive the following as catechumens on Sunday morning at 9:40 AM: Judges Cantara, Avery Merritt, Gabriel Wagner, Antonio and Esmerelda Gonzalez and their two young children, Oscar DeJung, Rory Donahue, Alicia Garrett (Nick's mom) and Samuel Still.

**All are welcome** to participate in the class for catechumens and inquirers in the Parish Hall at 3:30 PM on Saturday. Topics for the next eight Saturdays will be on the Sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation, the Eucharist, Confession, Priesthood, Marriage, concluding with a class on Death and the Funeral.

**Next Sunday, February 15**, is called the Sunday of the Last Judgment, so called because we read the Gospel Parable from Matthew 25 on the *Sheep and Goats*. It is also Meat-fare Sunday, which is to say, the last day that we eat

meat, as we prepare for Great Lent. From Feb. 22 until Pascha day (when we celebrate the Resurrection) we abstain from all meat products.

**On the three Sundays** prior to Great Lent (starting this weekend) we sing *Psalm 136* while the clergy are communing (properly speaking, this hymn belongs in Saturday evening Matins). This Psalm begins with the phrase: “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.” A soloist intones the verses of this ancient lament, and the people led by the choir respond by singing “Alleluia.” This was a psalm sung by the Jewish people who had been taken as captives to Babylon (in 597 BC the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed), with no hope of returning home. It was a time of bitter sorrow. In the Scriptures, the city of Babylon is seen as the antithesis of Jerusalem, as the broken and rebellious world opposed to God's Kingdom, the condition of sin, of confusion, of idolatry, of [sexual immorality](#), of exile from God. Babylon can be identified with the pig-pen in the [Parable of the Prodigal Son](#), the “far country,” i.e., an animal existence, the land of sin and exile from God. The Prodigal son was weeping in the pigpen only when he remembered the house of the Father. Hearing this Psalm, we realize that life as it is now is not normal. Paradise is normal. The Psalm guides our understanding and our repentance. Let us yearn for repentance and paradise. We come to the last, outrageous and violent verse of the Psalm, and wonder, what could it mean? *Happy shall he be, that shall take and dash thine infants against the rock. Alleluia.* Of course, the exiles in Babylon had their thoughts of rage and revenge. But for us, in our spiritual warfare, we are constantly confronted by intrusive thoughts—[logismi](#)—and passions that would lead us into sin. When they are just thoughts—infants, so to say, small and as yet harmless—we call upon the Name of Christ, who is the [Rock](#) (according to many scriptural verses), and the sins are crushed by calling on the Name of Jesus Christ before they capture and enslave us. —*Fr Lawrence*

**Next Saturday Feb. 14** there will be a gardening/grounds work party organized by Matushka Ann, to prune roses and other things and to clean up areas that have been neglected, etc. Come at 9 AM, and stay for however long you are able.

**During Great Lent** Matins will be celebrated most mornings (refer to the Calendar). Our Lenten Matins is abbreviated, and is about 1.25 hr long. Come and go as you need.