

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, February 26, 2017

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

Tone 3

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4

Sunday of Cheesefare: Expulsion of Adam from Paradise

Forgiveness Sunday, St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza (420). Ven. Sebastian of Poshekhónsk (ca. 1500). Martyr Sebastian (1st c.).

Troparion – Tone 3

*Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.
He has trampled down death by death. He has
become the first born of the dead. He has
delivered us from the depths of hell, and has
granted to the world// great mercy.*

Kontakion – Tone 6

*Master, Teacher of wisdom, / Bestower of
virtue, / you teach the thoughtless and protect
the poor: / Strengthen and enlighten my heart. /
Word of the Father, / let me not restrain my
mouth from crying to you: / Have mercy on me,
a transgressor, / O merciful Lord!*



*Sunday of Cheesefare:
Expulsion of Adam from Paradise -
Troparion & Kontakion*

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Richard Jr., offered by the family of Richard Jr.

The handmaiden of God, **Anne Mary Geleta**, the servant of God, **Constantine**;
the newborn infant, **Lucy Ann Schmidt**, still in the hospital, offered by
Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Reader Frederick Fetkowitz, presently receiving medical treatment, offered by
Archbishop Michael & the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Orthodox Quote of the Day

We must give thanks for all things to the lord, Who has rightly
given us difficulties that we may learn patience, which is more
beneficial than comforts, and ennoble the soul.

St. Moses of Optina

Living Without Hypocrisy: Spiritual Counsels of the Holy Elders of Optina p.4

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, February 26th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, March 1st

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 4th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 5th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, March 8th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 11th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 12th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
9:45 am: General
Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, March 15th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Bulletin Sponsors

The family of Richard, Jr.

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 8th Tone:

Pray and make your vows / before the Lord, our God!

(Psalm 75:12)

vs. In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. *(Psalm 75:2)*

Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

Alleluia in the 6th Tone:

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High.

(Psalm 91:2)

vs. To declare Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth by night.

(Psalm 91:3)

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."



Sunday of Cheesefare: Expulsion of Adam from Paradise

As we begin the Great Fast, the Church reminds us of Adam's expulsion from Paradise. God commanded Adam to fast (Gen. 2:16), but he did not obey. Because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden and lost the life of blessedness, knowledge of God, and communion with Him, for which they were created. Both they and their descendents became heirs of death and corruption.

“Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Joy of all the Sorrowful” founded in 1966

Let us consider the benefits of fasting, the consequences of disobedience, and recall our fallen state. Today we are invited to cleanse ourselves of evil through fasting and obedience to God. Our fasting should not be a negative thing, a mere abstention from certain foods. It is an opportunity to free ourselves from the sinful desires and urges of our fallen nature, and to nourish our souls with prayer, repentance, to participate in church services, and partake of the life-giving Mysteries of Christ.

At Forgiveness Vespers we sing: “Let us begin the time of fasting in light, preparing ourselves for spiritual efforts. Let us purify our soul, let us purify our body. As we abstain from food, let us abstain from all passion and enjoy the virtues of the spirit....”



Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com ; reader.charles@hotmail.com or rsub-deacon.vlashi@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



Orthodox Church of the Mother of God: Parish News

1) Candle Desk Supplies: Many thanks to those who donated a book of First Class stamps and 3 boxes of Holy Bread Bags. Remaining need: 8” Pillar Candles for Memorials. Questions? Speak to Trudy.

2) Kitchen Needs: Questions? Speak to Lore. a. Assorted sodas (small screw top bottles are best). b. Juice boxes (for the kids)

3) Hygiene Kits: You will remember the blockbuster donations by our parishioners of 67 hygiene kits assembled during the 2016 Dormition Fast. Several of you asked where they were sent. While it is impossible to say exactly, the CWS, with whom the IOCC partners, to collect and distribute kits (school, hygiene, and emergency clean up), sent out their 2016 Annual Impact Report. Below you will find an image, which shows the number of kits, the type of kit, and the location to which they went. May God grant you all many blessed years for your generosity to this project. I sincerely hope we will take up this project again during the 2017 Dormition Fast.

~Trudy~

Impact Report: 2016

CWS Kits | CWS Blankets

In 2016, your support enabled CWS to ensure that newly arrived refugees, those affected by flooding or fires, homeless shelter guests and migrant workers had much-needed supplies. Your support made an impact in the lives of those recovering from disasters or facing poverty or displacement around the world.



TOTAL KITS AND BLANKETS DISTRIBUTED: 237,659

The Protection of The Mother of God Sisterhood News:

The Sisterhood is having a Cheesefare Sunday luncheon today, February 26th. The menu will include traditional non-meat items such as blini and pierogies. The cost of the luncheon is \$5.00 per adult...

A Paschal basket raffle is also being planned. A large basket filled with traditional Paschal foods will be raffled off on Palm Sunday, April 9th. Tickets are now available, please see Lore Stefy.

Also being planned for this Lenten season is a pysanky (Ukrainian egg decorating) class. This class will be held on Sunday March 5th after coffee hour, from 12 to 2 PM. The class is free for church members. Non-parishioners are invited as well, but are asked to pay \$5.00 for supplies. See Holly Dawson for more information. .

Church School News:

This year we will be having a Paschal basket raffle just for kids! The basket will include items that will bring holiday happiness to any child. Tickets are not for sale, but can be earned each week your child attends church and church school. One ticket with the child's name on it will be placed in the raffle jar for each Sunday the child is in attendance during Great Lent. One winner will be drawn on Palm Sunday, April 9th.

On Saturday, March 25 at 10 AM, the Sunday School teachers will be holding a prosphora making class for all interested children. Each child will have the opportunity to prepare and make their own personal prosphora loaf. See Linda Dantine or Matushka Barbara Seerforce for more information.

Services of Great Lent 2017

February 19	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Meatfare
February 26	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Cheesefare Sunday
March 1	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow
March 5	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 8	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts St. Gregory: with potluck to follow
March 11	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers
March 12	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, St Gregory Palamas Sunday
March 15	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow
March 18	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers
March 19	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Sunday of the Holy Cross
March 22	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow
March 25	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers
March 26	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, celebrating Annunciation and St. John Climacus
March 29	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow
April 1	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers
April 2	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, St. Mary of Egypt
April 5	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with potluck to follow,
April 8	Saturday: 6:30 pm Vespers, Panikhida for the departed to follow
April 9	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Entry into Jerusalem
April 12	Wednesday: 6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts Sacrament of Holy Unction – Healing Sacrament, open to all Orthodox Christians
April 14	Friday: 7 pm Holy Friday Matins
April 15	Saturday: 11:30 pm Holy Pascha Vigil Nocturns, Matins, Divine Liturgy

For those who wish to attend the Canon of St. Andrew the first week of Lent, the following parish will be holding that service (updates will be provided as they are known).

Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Medford, NJ

7:00 p.m.: Monday (2/27), Tuesday (2/28), Wednesday (3/1), Thursday (3/2)



NY/NJ Diocese News

Archpastoral Letter for Great Lent

Dearly Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family: Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!

Once again, the Church beckons us to begin the sacred season of Great Lent, providing us with the spirit with which we are to enter into it from the Vespers of Forgiveness Sunday: “Let us enter the Fast with joy, O faithful ...”

Lent is our journey with the Lord to Holy Pascha ... and the Church has been preparing us for it the past few weeks with a change in orientation in liturgical time. Just a number of weeks ago, we were celebrating events that reveal Who Christ is – the Nativity, on which we proclaim Christ as the Son of God ... and Theophany, on which we proclaim Christ as One of the Holy Trinity. Now, however, we move to commemorate events that reveal Why Christ came – the Cross, the Tomb and the Resurrection on the third day. The Holy Church is moving us together, as a community of believers, beyond the Gospel message of the Incarnation to the Gospel message of Deliverance.

Even now, in the distance we see a procession. But this procession is not led by the Shepherds and the Magi, or by the Forerunner and his Disciples. Rather, this procession is one in which praises are mixed with curses; in which Our Lord’s blessing on us is mixed with His Blood upon Himself. From afar, for every shout we hear of “Hosanna,” there is a cry of “Crucify Him!” not far behind. Yes, Great Lent is on the horizon, and we learn from Zacchaeus our first example of how to rightly enter this season: in deep awareness of our own true need, but in clear anticipation of the only One Who can meet it: “The Son of Man (Who) has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

What did Zacchaeus the publican see when he climbed that sycamore tree so long ago? He saw personal salvation, because salvation is a Person. St. Nikolai Velimirovich tells us, “Christ is the salvation that comes, and Zacchaeus is the house to which He comes.” The 20th century Saint, who was the Rector of St. Tikhon’s Seminary and reposed in that hallowed place, continues: “Each of us is a house in which sin dwells when Christ is far off, and to which salvation comes as Christ draws near. Whether Christ is able or not to draw near my house and yours, depends on us.” The spring of Lent is a season for spring cleaning of our homes, and a season for “spiritual spring cleaning” of our hearts. Over the next seven weeks, we will struggle

for sure, as Zacchaeus did, for a clear vision of our Salvation, Who Himself will be “lifted high” upon the Cross to achieve our deliverance from sin and death and the devil. But will we make that vision personally our own?

Our preparation for the Lenten journey also includes the Church’s example of the Publican, not the Pharisee, on how we should pray, and how we should not pray, to God. For the Great Fast is the time of prayer par excellence. Then comes the lesson of the Prodigal Son, when the Church depicts for us how merciful the Lord is when His fallen away child returns to Him in repentance – accepting him with love, without berating him, without reproaching him for what he had done, but with love and forgiveness only. And then, the Church prepares us with the account of the Last Judgment beforehand, so that while we are able, we might run from the left side to the right side of the Righteous Judge ... by using our freedom to serve the Lord and to help those persons He presents to us on our path, who are made in the image and likeness of God and who are in need – “the least of His brethren.” And finally, the Gospel tells us that we will indeed be truly forgiven our sins by the Lord, but only so long “as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Indeed the journey of Lent is meant for us to run – to meet the All Compassionate Lord on the path to salvation that He has forged for us – out of love. Not out of forced obligation, or repetition of tradition – but in genuine love for the Savior. Our Lenten labors – to improve our daily prayer life, our faithful reading of the Holy Scripture, our fervent participation in the divine services, our frequent reception of the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, our more strenuous fasting discipline, our generous sharing of time, talents and treasure in thanksgiving to God for His blessings, and our showing of genuine love for our neighbor in tangible ways – must be done out of love for Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ ... seeking to imitate Him in thought, word and deed, and in doing so becoming more and more like Him ... Who loves us more than we love ourselves.

If this is the work that we pledge to do and accomplish during Great Lent this year, then indeed we will inherit what God has prepared for us from the foundation of the world – life with Him forever in the Heavenly Kingdom – and the taste of it this Pascha, celebrating our Salvation with a “joy that no one can ever take away from us” (John16:22).

My beloved in the Lord, I wish all of you the blessings of a Holy Lent, as you love the Lord and serve His Church, drawing ever closer to Him and becoming more and more like Him, and I remain with humble prayers and sincere love for you,

Devotedly yours in our Savior Jesus Christ,

+ M I C H A E L

Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Brotherhood of Saint Moses the Black

The annual **Conference of the Brotherhood of Saint Moses the Black** will be convened on **6-8 October 2017 in Princeton NJ**. The theme is: *"Closer to Christ, Closer to Each Other."* The Brotherhood is a pan-Orthodox organization committed to making the Orthodox faith available to the African American community in America.

Congratulations to the following members of our Diocesan family:

Presbyter Leonid and Matushka Laura Schmidt, on the birth of their daughter Lucy Ann, on Thursday, February 16. Please continue to pray for infant Lucy, still in the hospital. Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, good health and salvation, visitation and good hastening in all things to Thy handmaiden, the newborn Lucy Ann; and protect and preserve her for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"

Reader Paul Fedoroff, ordained to the rank of Sub-deacon, by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, in Christ the Savior Church, Ballston Lake NY, on Sunday, February 19. Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, good health and salvation, visitation and good hastening in all things to Thy servant, the newly-ordained Sub-deacon Paul, and protect and preserve him for many blessed years! "Mnogaya Lyeta!"

NEW RESOURCE: Sunday Evening Vespers during Lent - Booklet

The Commission on Liturgical Music [CoLM] has prepared a booklet for Lenten Vespers on Sunday Evenings that is suitable for printing. You will find it on the diocesan website; by linking to the CoLM webpage and looking in the “Booklets for Parish Use” section.

The direct link is:

http://nvnjoca.org/files/Music/2017/Lenten_Vespers_booklet.pdf

Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

Archbishop Michael to address St. Moses Brotherhood annual conference



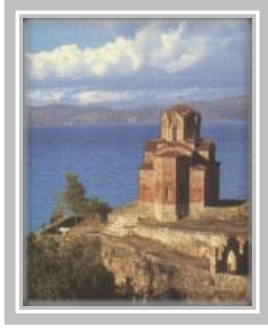
His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey will head the lineup of speakers at the 24th annual conference of the Brotherhood of Saint Moses the Black October 6-8, 2017.

The conference, titled “Closer to Christ, Closer to Each Other”, will be held at the Mother of God Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Princeton, NJ.

Other speakers include Archpriest Moses Berry, Hieromonk Alexi [Altschul], Priest Jerome Sanderson, and the Nun Catherine [Weston].

A pan-Orthodox organization, the Brotherhood embraces individuals committed to multi-racial, Orthodox Christian fellowship and study of the Church’s ancient roots and to bringing Orthodoxy to the African American community as a means of “expanding the Mission.”

Additional information will be posted on the Brotherhood’s web site as it becomes available. Audio recordings of lectures and presentations given at earlier conferences also are available.



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, XCVI:

Every creature frightened me when I was a child; but since the time I grew up I have felt compassion for every creature.

Every creature seemed to me to be stronger than me while I was a child. Now I feel stronger than everything, and I feel compassion for everything.

For I learned to stand beside You, my Lord, who are surrounded by immortal hosts like a mountain covered with pines. And I have been growing out of You, like a tree out of a mountain.

While I was a child, I took each creature to be my teacher and spent some time with each of them. And I learned about infirmity and death and crying out to You.

I searched for the strongest creature, so that I could grab hold of it and save myself from change and fluctuation. But my eyes never did see it, nor did my ears ever hear it, nor did my feet ever stumble upon it. Time raises all its children in order to wrestle with them, and in order to bend them as a joke and to snap them in two and tear them out by the roots as it laughs at the horror and terror of mortals.

I grabbed hold of a flower and said: "In beauty it is stronger than I am." But when autumn arrived, the flower died before my eyes, and I could do nothing to help it. So I turned away with tears and grabbed hold of tall trees.

But with the passage of time, the trees were torn out by the roots, and fell to the ground like vanquished soldiers, and I turned away with tears, and grabbed hold of stone. "It is stronger than me," I said, "with it I am secure."

But with the passage of time the stone crumbled to dust before my eyes, and the wind carried it off and I turned away with tears and latched onto the stars. "The stars are stronger than anything," I said, "I shall cling to them and shall not fall."

But after I embraced the stars and began to converse with them in secret whispers, I heard the moaning of the dying, and I turned away with tears and latched onto people. "People strut erectly and freely," I said, "there is strength in them; I shall cling to them lest I fall."

But with the passage of time I saw even the strongest among men helplessly skidding on the ice of time into the soundless abyss, and they left me solitary.

In an anxious sweat I contemplated the universe in its entirety and said: "You are stronger than everything. I shall cling to you. Keep me from skidding into the soundless abyss." And I obtained this response: "This evening I too am sinking into the soundless abyss, and tomorrow there will be another universe in my place. In vain do you tie yourself to me, for I am your feeble fellow wayfarer."

Again I turned to people, to the wisest among the sons of men, and I asked for their counsel. But they quarreled as they gave me answers, until death waved its hand and brought stillness into the midst of the squabblers.

Again I turned to people, to the happiest among the sons of men, and asked for their opinion. (As though any opinion could be given by those who think by means of flesh!) But they took me as a joke for their amusement, until death raised its staff and covered their tongues with mold.

Again I turned to people, to those who begot me and brought me among creatures, and I asked them. Their wrinkled faces began to turn pale; their eyes filled with tears; and they started to stammer: "In ignorance we were begotten, in ignorance we begot you, and our ignorance we share with you."

Again I turned to people, to my friends and I said: "What do you think, my friends?" But they kept a long silence, until with shame and without lifting their eyes they began to mutter: "For a long time we have been preparing to ask you what you think."

And when I knocked on the very last door to ask my question, the door opened and I saw a dead man being carried out.

When there were no more doors to knock on, even my tears ceased, and a searing fear stuck its claws into my bones.

One last tear was still to be found, and it rolled its way down to the bottom of my soul. And behold, some unknown door, which that final tear struck, opened, and then You appeared, my King and my Father, all surrounded by immortal hosts like a pine-covered mountain engulfed in unscorching flame.

And light began to dance like the many sounds of a harp, and I heard a voice saying: "I am the One whom you seek. Cling to Me. My name is: **I AM.**"

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XCVI:

III. Us and Our Neighbors

How to Relate to the Sins of Others

Find evil in yourself and not in other people or things, were with you have not learned how to relate properly. This is how a child relates with fire or a knife: he burns himself, he cuts himself.

St. Sebastian of Karaganda



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

The Church’s Next Generation

How do we keep our youth in the Church?

We are living in an age that has witnessed changes on a massive scale as never before. The way we communicate has changed with the coming of the internet, with information available that would have required a library and advanced degrees to access in the past. Ideas and information are available that leave our youth with choices that were never available a generation ago.

Moral norms have changed, with values and lifestyles that would have never been seen as acceptable in the past becoming part of mainstream. Gay marriage, the high divorce rate, children being raised by unwed parents, and profane music that sounds like it came from the underworld (which inspired it, I’m sure). Child sexual abuse is reaching shocking numbers, with clergy, boy scout leaders, coaches and police officers under arrest. With the environmental crisis increasing and political unrest spreading, hope is fading. Our world is polarized in ways that are mind boggling, and the economy has lowered the hopes and expectations of a whole generation.

With all that has changed in our world, is it any wonder young people are abandoning the Christian faith in droves? With the youthful questioning of authority, it is not enough to simply expect them to accept the authority of bishops, priests, and the traditions and teachings of the Church. There needs to be a change in the way we of the older generations communicate with our youth.

In this age of information we must demonstrate to our youth the difference between information and wisdom. Wisdom is that which is passed down from the past and which imparts substance and enlightenment. Wisdom is not about information, and does not compete with worldly knowledge. Wisdom need not be in conflict with science, nor be linked to narrow mindedness. Wisdom is that which not only connects us to the best of human knowledge and experience, but links us to that which is eternal. Wisdom gives us the ability to relate to our Creator, to our culture and to others. The urgency of imparting this message is great, for we have a whole generation that is in danger of losing faith in God.

It is not enough to expect our young people to attend services if we do not listen to them, respect them, and try to understand the world that is confronting them. They are growing up in a different world than people of my generation experienced, and this important difference must be acknowledged and respected. We can’t simply teach the truth to our youth, we must live it in a way that makes it real for them. We must be patient with them, be open to their struggles and non-confrontational when they disagree with us, or we will lose them forever to Christ.

Today’s young people have the same hopes and dreams that previous generations held, but this fast changing world is depriving them of hope. Nihilism has become the religion of countless numbers of our youth, with the result that life has become meaningless. The information age has driven God out of societal, cultural and governmental prominence, resulting in mass disbelief.

We who are of the older generations must witness to the wealth of truth that is in the ancient knowledge and wisdom of the Church by demonstrating its worth in how we live. If young people do not see a genuine living out of the Faith in us, they will keep looking for truth in directions that will take them far from it. Young people are worthy of our love and respect, and worthy of sharing with us the life in Christ that is their heritage as well. The Church will not be a draw to our youth unless her members demonstrate holiness of life and reach out with love, patience and understanding, offering something that is seen as real by today’s young people.

Finally, today’s young people need to see joy in the hearts of those of us who have taken on Christ. If we do not have joy in our hearts the youth will see nothing that is attractive to them, and will continue in the wasteland of consumerism, materialism, nihilism, and all hope for the future of our planet will have died.



Deacon: “Let us love one another that with oneness of mind we may confess:”

People/Choir: “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Trinity, one in essence and undivided.” (Byzantine Divine Liturgy, just before the exchange of the Kiss of Peace)

Today is “Forgiveness Sunday,” when in our churches we have a special, pre-Lenten Rite of Forgiveness (asking forgiveness of, and forgiving, one another). But of course we have a Rite of Forgiveness at Divine Liturgy every Sunday as described above, just before we proclaim our common faith in the Creed and begin the central, Eucharistic Prayer. This “Rite of Forgiveness” often goes unnoticed, since it is only the celebrating clergy who actually exchange the “kiss of peace,” and they do so in the sanctuary. Nonetheless, the call of the deacon, “Let us love one another...” is addressed to all of us, also to me. And I find it helpful also today, as I prepare for Forgiveness Sunday.

Indeed, “Let us” love. I don’t “have to” love, but I can. Because I have that God-given and God-like capacity, in Him and from Him. And “He loved us,” as C. S. Lewis says, “not because we were lovable, but because He is love.”

So let me love, that I may let go, forgive, and be forgiven. Let me let myself love, rather than demand or expect from, myself and others, so I can let go of burdensome resentments and move forward. “Getting over a painful experience,” if I may quote C.S. Lewis again, “is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.” So let me let go and move forward this Lenten season, that I may grow in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“he has giving us difficulties that we may learn patience, which is more beneficial than comforts, and enobles the soul.”

+St. Moses of Optina

James 1:2-4

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,† knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Romans 5:3-5

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.†

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

Since we have so many examples of this virtue (humility) that confers such blessings on the soul, let us follow them as fully as possible and humble ourselves in every way.

- St Philotheos of Sinai, 40 Texts on Watchfulness

Ancient Christian Wisdom

All the unpleasant things which are within your soul and cause you anxiety can become occasions for the glorification of God and cease to torment you. Have trust in God. Then you will forget your worries and become His instruments. Distress shows that we are not entrusting our life to Christ.

+ St. Porphyrios

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

“Hoping in God is the best insurance policy for everyone!”

+Saint Paisios the Athonite (1924-1994)

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St Maria of Paris: Love One Another

“No amount of thought will ever result in any greater formulation than the three words, ‘Love one another’, so along as it is love to the end and without exceptions.”



OCMC News - February 26th is Mission Sunday

by Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Beloved Faithful,

In the hymns and Scriptural readings of the Sunday of Forgiveness, our Mother Church reminds us that the Great Fast we are about to embark on is a matter of spiritual urgency that will lead us from death to life. Nowhere is this more clear than in the words of the Holy Apostle Paul read during the Divine Liturgy: Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:11).

The days ahead will involve struggle against those dark forces within us that separate us from God and one another: anger, greed, lust, harsh judgment, our outsized appetites for food and fortune. Over the course of the next few weeks we will be challenged repeatedly to leave behind our petty preoccupations and selfish pursuits, to prepare ourselves to encounter the Lord in the Light of His Resurrection. And in encountering him, we encounter our true selves. We become sons and daughters of the light!

The time of the Fast, properly understood, is a time of preparation for joy. And the joy of the Resurrection, genuinely experienced, compels us to share it with all of creation. It is that joy which drove the first witnesses of the Risen Lord to the far reaches of their world. And it is that genuine joy, the assurance of eternal life in loving communion with the living God, revealed to us by the Risen Lord and made possible for us by his Holy Spirit, that continues to drive men and women in our own day to the far reaches of our world, to places where the Good News has yet to be heard.

On this final Sunday before the Great Fast, let us look ahead to the joy that awaits us at the end of our Lenten journey, and let us join together in the work of our brothers and sisters who are bringing that joy to more and more people. Remember the work of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), a common ministry of all Orthodox Christian jurisdictions throughout our nation, endorsed by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States. Pray for our Orthodox missionaries and for those yet to be reached with the message of the Gospel. Consider serving as a missionary, or as part of a short-term mission team. And, remember that even if you can't go, you can participate through your financial support to help enable the great and holy work of making disciples of all nations!

In Christ,

Metropolitan SAVAS
Liaison to the Assembly

Mr. John Colis
Board President

Fr. Martin Ritsi
Executive Director