

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, March 12, 2017

Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

St Gregory Palamas: John 10:9-16

Tone 5

Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3

St Gregory Palamas: Hebrews 7:26-8:2

2nd Sunday of Great Lent: St Gregory Palamas

Synaxis of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Caves Lavra. Ven. Theophanes the Confessor, of Sigriane (818). Righteous Phineas, grandson of Aaron (ca. 1500 B.C.). St. Gregory Dialogus, Pope of Rome (604). Ven. Simeon the New Theologian (1021).

Troparion – Tone 8

O light of Orthodoxy, teacher of the Church, its confirmation, / O ideal of monks and invincible champion of theologians, / O wonder-working Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and preacher of grace, / always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion – Tone 4

Now is the time for action! / Judgment is at the doors! / So let us rise and fast, / offering alms with tears of compunction and crying: / “Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea; / but forgive us, O Master of All, / so that we may receive the incorruptible crowns.”

Kontakion – Tone 8

Holy and divine instrument of wisdom, / joyful trumpet of theology, / together we sing your praises, O God-inspired Gregory. / Since you now stand before the Original Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father, / so that we may sing to you: “Rejoice, preacher of grace.”



2nd Sunday of Great Lent: St Gregory Palamas

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Marina Nushi (Home of Hope), on her birthday (3/12) offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Paulina & Markela Papa (Home of Hope), on their birthday (3/15) offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Valerie Lively, offered by Paul Jankowski.

Matushka Christine Hoeplinger, currently hospitalized, offered by Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY/NJ.

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, March 12th

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

Wednesday, March 15th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 18th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 19th

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

Wednesday, March 22nd

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 25th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, March 26th

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

Wednesday, March 29th

6:30 pm: Liturgy/
Presanctified Gifts

Bulletin Sponsors

Paul Jankowski

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 5th Tone:

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever.
(*Psalm 11:8*)
vs. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly!
(*Psalm 11:2*)

Another, Tone 1 (St. Gregory):

My mouth shall speak wisdom, the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.
(*Psalm 48:4*)

Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3

Brethren, "You O Lord, in the beginning, didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

St. Gregory: Hebrews 7:26-8:2

Brethren, it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever. Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.

Alleluia in the 5th Tone:

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth
from generation to generation. (*Psalm 88:2*)
vs. For Thou hast said: "Mercy will be established forever; My truth will be prepared in
the heavens." (*Psalm 88:3*)

Another, Tone 2 (St. Gregory):

The mouth of the righteous shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak of
judgment. (*Psalm 36:30*)

Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins'-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

St. Gregory: John 10:9-16

The Lord said, I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.



2nd Sunday of Great Lent: St Gregory Palamas

This Sunday was originally dedicated to Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (February 23). After his glorification in 1368, a second commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas (November 14) was appointed for the Second Sunday of Great Lent as a second "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, was born in the year 1296 in Constantinople. Saint Gregory's father became a prominent dignitary at the court of Andronicus II Paleologos (1282-1328), but he soon died, and Andronicus himself took part in the raising and education of the fatherless boy. Endowed with fine abilities and great diligence, Gregory mastered all the subjects which then comprised the full course of medieval higher education. The emperor hoped that the youth would devote himself to government work. But Gregory, barely twenty years old, withdrew to Mount Athos in the year 1316 (other sources say 1318) and became a novice in the Vatopedi monastery under the guidance of the monastic Elder Saint Nicodemus of Vatopedi (July 11). There he was tonsured and began on the path of asceticism. A year later, the holy Evangelist John the Theologian appeared to him in a vision and promised him his spiritual protection. Gregory's mother and sisters also became monastics.

After the demise of the Elder Nicodemus, Saint Gregory spent eight years of spiritual struggle under the guidance of the Elder Nicephorus, and after the latter's death, Gregory transferred to the Lavra of Saint Athanasius (July 5). Here he served in the trapeza, and then became a church singer. But after three years, he resettled in the small skete of Glossia, striving for a greater degree of spiritual perfection. The head of this monastery began to teach the young man the method of unceasing prayer and mental activity, which had been cultivated by monastics, beginning with the great desert ascetics of the fourth century: Evagrius Pontikos and Saint Macarius of Egypt (January 19).

Later on, in the eleventh century Saint Simeon the New Theologian (March 12) provided detailed instruction in mental activity for those praying in an outward manner, and the ascetics of Athos put it into practice. The experienced use of mental prayer (or prayer of the heart), requiring solitude and quiet, is called "Hesychasm" (from the Greek "hesychia" meaning calm, silence), and those practicing it were called "hesychasts."

During his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychasm and adopted it as an essential part of his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he and the brethren retreated to Thessalonica, where he was then ordained to the holy priesthood.

Saint Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of a hermit. Five days of the week he spent in silence and prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did he come out to his people. He celebrated divine services and preached sermons. For those present in church, his teaching often evoked both tenderness and tears. Sometimes he visited theological gatherings of the city’s educated youth, headed by the future patriarch, Isidore. After he returned from a visit to Constantinople, he found a place suitable for solitary life near Thessalonica the region of Bereia. Soon he gathered here a small community of solitary monks and guided it for five years.

In 1331 the saint withdrew to Mt. Athos and lived in solitude at the skete of Saint Sava, near the Lavra of Saint Athanasius. In 1333 he was appointed Igumen of the Esphigmenou monastery in the northern part of the Holy Mountain. In 1336 the saint returned to the skete of Saint Sava, where he devoted himself to theological works, continuing with this until the end of his life.

In the 1330s events took place in the life of the Eastern Church which put Saint Gregory among the most significant universal apologists of Orthodoxy, and brought him great renown as a teacher of hesychasm.

About the year 1330 the learned monk Barlaam had arrived in Constantinople from Calabria, in Italy. He was the author of treatises on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he received a university chair in the capital city and began to expound on the works of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), whose “apophatic” (“negative”, in contrast to “kataphatic” or “positive”) theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Barlaam journeyed to Mt. Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychasts. Saying that it was impossible to know the essence of God, he declared mental prayer a heretical error. Journeying from Mount Athos to Thessalonica, and from there to Constantinople, and later again to Thessalonica, Barlaam entered into disputes with the monks and attempted to demonstrate the created, material nature of the light of Tabor (i.e. at the Transfiguration). He ridiculed the teachings of the monks about the methods of prayer and about the uncreated light seen by the hesychasts.

Saint Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, replied with verbal admonitions at first. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing. Thus appeared the “Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts” (1338). Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with the assistance of the saint, compiled a general response to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called “Hagiorite Tome.” At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Hagia Sophia Saint Gregory Palamas debated with Barlaam, focusing upon the nature of the light of Mount Tabor. On May 27, 1341 the Council accepted the position of Saint Gregory Palamas, that God, unapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself was anathemized and fled to Calabria.

But the dispute between the Palamites and the Barlaamites was far from over. To these latter belonged Barlaam’s disciple, the Bulgarian monk Akyndinos, and also Patriarch John XIV Kalekos (1341-1347); the emperor Andronicus III Paleologos (1328-1341) was also inclined toward their opinion. Akyndinos, whose name means “one who inflicts no harm,” actually caused great harm by his heretical teaching. Akyndinos wrote a series of tracts in which he declared Saint Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of causing church disorders. The saint, in turn, wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos’ errors. The patriarch supported Akyndinos and called Saint Gregory the cause of all disorders and disturbances in the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison for four years. In 1347, when John the XIV was replaced on the patriarchal throne by Isidore (1347-1349), Saint Gregory Palamas was set free and was made Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In 1351 the Council of Blachernae solemnly upheld the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonica did not immediately accept Saint Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. On one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. Even in captivity, Saint Gregory preached to Christian prisoners and even to his Moslem captors. The Hagarenes were astonished by the wisdom of his words. Some of the Moslems were unable to endure this, so they beat him and would have killed him if they had not expected to obtain a large ransom for him. A year later, Saint Gregory was ransomed and returned to Thessalonica.

Saint Gregory performed many miracles in the three years before his death, healing those afflicted with illness. On the eve of his repose, Saint John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words “To the heights! To the heights!” Saint Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359. In 1368 he was canonized at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheus (1354-1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.

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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

The Protection of the Mother of God Sisterhood News:

The Sisterhood will be raffling off a traditional Paschal basket on Sunday April 9th. The basket will contain many delicious holiday items. If you wish to contribute an item to the basket, please see the sign-up sheet in the community room. Raffle tickets are \$1.00, and each parishioner is asked to sell 10 tickets. Please see Lore Stefy for tickets.

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 Dantinne or Matushka Barbara Searfoorce for more information.

Services of Great Lent 2017

March 12	Sunday: 10 am Divine Liturgy, St Gregory Palamas Sunday
March 15	Wednesday: 630 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



NY/NJ Diocese News



Your Opportunity to Support Diocesan Ministries

"Please consider becoming a Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor by offering a sacrificial gift of \$100, \$250, \$500, \$1,000 or whatever you are able this year to help our Diocese and support a ministry of your choice."

*"May the Lord bless
and keep you in His loving care!"
+ Archbishop Michael*

As part of a *"Vision for Our Future,"* Archbishop Michael launched the **Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors [DDB]** program in January 2011. He called upon the faithful of the diocese to voluntarily support three initiatives through their financial gifts. These initiatives are:

- **Support for Mission Parishes**
- **Support for Seminarians**
- **Support for Existing Parishes**

Thanks to the sacrificial generosity of **DDBs** from throughout the diocese and beyond, over **\$831,000** was contributed during the first six years (2011-2016) of the program!

Last year a record-breaking total of **\$181,265** was received. As a result, vital ministries have received much-needed support; the work of the Church is being funded as never before!

There are visible "fruits" of our labors and efforts as **mission parishes** are being established and supported, **seminarians** are receiving scholarships, and **struggling parishes** are being revitalized.

Your generous support is what being a Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor is all about. Your love, your prayers, and your sharing of the riches with which you have been blessed make it all possible. **You may contribute by check** using the donation form included on the brochure available for download from the Diocese website and sending it to us by mail. Or, **you may contribute on-line** using your credit card. For your convenience and safety, our credit card donations are processed through Payment Processing Consultants to ensure security and protect your transaction.



Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News

IN THE NEWS: From coast to coast!

Simpson, PA: E PA Diocese issues appeal for Fr. John Nightingale

Following the celebration of a Presanctified Liturgy during Great Lent 2016, Priest John Nightingale—then Acting Rector of Saint Basil Church, Simpson, PA—experienced a tragic accidental fall. While he regained sensation in his arms and legs, he was unable to walk and had minimal use of his arms and hands and, according to His Eminence, Archbishop Mark of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, he is considered a quadriplegic.

“Father John was not feeling well and went out to the porch for fresh air,” Archbishop Mark related in a January 2017 letter to the clergy and faithful of his diocese, in which he appealed for financial assistance for Father John and his wife, Matushka Kyra. “At some point he passed out and fell over the railing, injuring his neck, vertebrae and spinal cord. He has been in the hospital since that time.

“After months of therapy, Father John is now able to feed himself, but is still unable to walk,” Archbishop Mark added. “Due to the lack of strength in his arms and legs, he is unable to transfer himself from his bed to a wheel chair, necessitating nursing assistance and the installation of a lift in his home.”

Father John’s devoted wife, Matushka Kyra, has driven back and forth to the VA Hospital in Bronx, NY during the past year, in addition to caring for her elderly parents.

With the Nightingales’ medical and related expenses mounting, Archbishop Mark called upon the faithful to offer financial assistance to Father John and Matushka Kyra, in part to construct a doorway and ramp into their home, to make a first-floor rest room handicapped accessible, and to purchase a van with a lift.

“A Vietnam veteran, Father John lived in California and later Alaska, where he worked as a hospice chaplain for a number of years before enrolling in Saint Tikhon’s Seminary,” Archbishop Mark added. “After his ordination to the priesthood, he served regularly as a supply priest, turning over his stipends to the diocese without keeping a penny for his time and travel. While in the Bronx VA Hospital, he has provided pastoral care to other patients—while being a patient himself.

“Since the January appeal letter went out, we have received \$33,778.00, for which the Nightingales are most grateful,” added Archbishop Mark. “From these donations, \$25,855.05 went to pay off the remaining balance on a van and \$750.00 related to the rest room upgrade.”

The Nightingales still need to install a lift to transfer Father John back and forth from his bed and wheel chair—an expense of some \$6,000.00. The VA will pay for three days of nursing care per week, but all other days will be paid “out of pocket.”

Father John is slated to be discharged from the Bronx VA in the coming weeks.

Donations to assist the Nightingales, especially during this season of Great Lent, are being accepted with gratitude by the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania and may be sent directly to the Diocesan Office, 144 Saint Tikhon’s Road, Waymart, PA 18472, earmarked “Father John Nightingale.” All donations will be acknowledged by the Diocese.

Harrisburg, PA: Fr. George Johnson offers invocation at PA Senate swearing-in ceremony

On January 3, 2017, Archpriest George Johnson, Rector of Saint John the Baptist Church, Conemaugh, PA, led the Senate, family members and friends in prayer as part of the Pennsylvania Senate’s swearing-in ceremonies for the recently elected Senator Wayne Langerholc, Jr. Accompanying Father George was his wife, Matushka Faith.

Father George called upon God to help members of the Senate to “open their minds, their hearts, and their lips, so that they may come to understand Thy most Holy will; bless their lives with Thy goodness, and direct their lives in the path of Thy goodness.” He asked God to give the state senators the wisdom of Solomon, the desire to protect like the guardian angels, and the ability to care like the Good Samaritan.

Brookline, MA: OCF opens search for Executive Director

Orthodox Christian Fellowship [OCF] recently opened a search for the position of Executive Director.

An agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA, OCF’s mission is to transform the lives of college students in the US and Canada by guiding them along the path to Jesus Christ through His Church while cultivating a campus community of worship, witness, service, fellowship and education. Headquartered on the campus of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, OCF maintains a network of over 400 chapters.

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

OCF is seeking a motivated individual who can champion Orthodox campus ministry and oversee its regional and national programs. The candidate must demonstrate strong leadership ability, management skills, the ability to multitask, and an understanding of and respect for the practices, traditions, theology and structure of the Orthodox Church.

A detailed job description and application details are available on-line. Deadline for submitting applications is May 1, 2017. Applicants will be reviewed and contacted based on the order of submitted applications with the hope that the position will be filled by the target date of June 2017.

Somerset, NJ: OCAMPR announces 2017 conference speakers, issues call for papers and workshops

The Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion [OCAMPR] recently announced that the keynote speaker for its 2017 Conference will be His Eminence, Metropolitan Isaiah of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver.

Slated to be held at the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Cultural Center, Somerset, NJ November 2-4, 2017, the conference will have as its theme “Resiliency: Body, Mind and Spirit.” Among the other plenary speakers are Deacon Euthym Kontaxis, M.D., Medical Perspective; Demetra Jaquet, D.Min., Psychological Perspective; and Archbishop John Behr, D.Phil., Theological Perspective.

OCAMPR also welcomes paper and workshop presentations related to the conference theme and/or other topics related to the interface of Orthodox healing traditions with contemporary theories and practices of care. Proposals, which should be sent to ocamprinfo@gmail.com no later than May 1, should include the title of the paper or workshop, a one-paragraph abstract, and the presenter’s credentials. Additional information is available on OCAMPR’s web site in advance of the conference.

San Marcos, CA: St. Katherine University to host pan-Orthodox Singles’ Retreat May 26-29

A retreat for Orthodox Christian adult singles of all ages will be sponsored by the University of Saint Katherine, San Marcos, CA, May 26-29, 2017. In addition to worship and inspirational presentations, the weekend will offer ample fellowship activities—including a visit to the San Diego Zoo—and a service project. Priest George Morelli will be the main speaker.

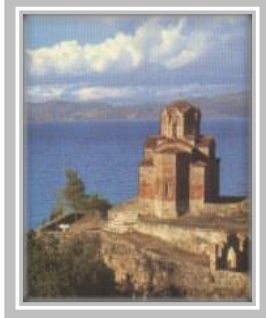
The deadline for registration is April 25. The \$300.00 registration fee includes housing, meals, zoo admission and lunch, and all retreat events and resources. To register please contact Donna Marie Fletcher, Event Administrator, at OrthodoxSinglesRetreat@mail.com.

Cambridge, NY: New Skete to hold Lenten retreat

“Finding Peace in Troubled Times: Moving from Fear to Inner Transformation” will be the theme of the annual Lenten retreat at New Skete, Cambridge, NY Saturday, March 18, 2017.

The retreat theme will be developed in three presentations throughout the day. In the morning, Sister Rebecca will offer a reflection titled “Experiencing and Befriending our Shadow: Emotions of Anger, Shame and Fear,” in which she will outline how looking inward with compassion allows our emotions to become pointers and paths to transformation and how these energies may provide an opening to a silent deep space to unconditional experience of God’s love. In the afternoon, Brother Stavros will speak on forgiveness and Brother Christopher will offer a presentation titled “The Peace That Passes Understanding: The Anchor of Lectio Divina.” The retreat will conclude with the celebration of Great Vespers and a Healing Service.

Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, XCVIII:



I am a book inscribed both inside and out, and sealed with seven seals. My neighbors sound out the letters but cannot pronounce my name.

My neighbors, how then will you read the name of the Lord, who has cleansed me from the mire, if you cannot pronounce my name?

I am Your book, my Lord and King, I am Your writing both inside and out. Only the world smears me with its illiterate hand, and I become unclear and illegible.

I am Your book, my Lord and King, and the seals, with which You sealed me as Your sacred scripture, are Yours.

Beneath each seal is concealed one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one of the gifts of the everlasting life of the Heavenly Triad. Who will open what God has sealed --who can except God alone?

My neighbors say to me: "You are inscribed all over by the hand of the world, and all the gifts within you are gifts of the world, and yet you are a holy book?"

Thus do the illiterate read me, and I feel that they do not know my name.

Truly, the world has scrawled much on my heart with its clumsy hand. And the world has stuffed many unsolicited gifts into my heart.

Nevertheless, even when I erase all the world's scrawling from my heart and throw out all the worldly gifts from my heart, I am not throwing my heart out of myself nor am I leaving it empty.

Moreover, when I erase all the scrawling of the world on my mind and throw out all the worldly gifts from my mind, I am not throwing my mind out of myself, nor am I leaving it empty.

And I know, that my spirit has written on my body, and my body has written on my spirit. Indeed, even if I erase all the writing of my spirit on my body, and all the writing of my body on my spirit, I shall nevertheless not remain an uninscribed book.

When I throw the entire world out of myself, again I see within myself a book sealed with seven seals. This is Your book, O Lord. This is the scripture of my Lord. Who can unseal God's book except God alone?

Whoever acknowledges You as the Father, You acknowledge as a son, and for a son You open the book and read to him the mysteries. You break seal after seal, and read to him the mysteries.

In vain do people read me, they will not be reading me. They will be reading only what the world has inscribed on me and in me. But their eyes cannot read beneath the seals.

There are not many words in this book, but each word is as fiery as flame and as long as immortality, and is more pleasurable than all the pleasures of this world.

Seven words -- seven spirits and seven lives, three above and three below, indivisibly connected in the center to one undying flame.

The sacred masculinity of heaven and the virginal femininity of earth, a flame girded with an immaculate sash, adorned with seven stars.

But who dares to cast a pearl before those who feed on rotting apples? Who dares to read Your mysteries to those who are literate only when it comes to the fat letters of the world?

An invisible hand is trying to write everywhere throughout the world, but the world keeps vying and striving with its own deathful hand to write -- lethal letters.

O Lord All-merciful, look upon those who look upon You, and guide their hand, so that, when they write, they may write Your name on themselves both inside and Out.

O my God All-wise, direct the eyes of Your elect to the seals of Your book, so that they may anticipate with prayer and read with understanding, once You quietly and gently break the seals of the mysteries.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XCVIII:

**III. Us and Our Neighbors
How to Relate to the Sins of Others**

Do not lose your temper with those who sin. Do not have a passion for noticing every sin in your neighbor and judging it, as we usually do. Everyone will give an answer for himself before God. Especially, do not look with evil intention on the sins of those older than you, with whom you have no business. But correct your own sins, your own heart.

St. John of Kronstadt, My Life in Christ, I.6

The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon



A Compassionate People

We must become a more compassionate people

“In this way will the inequalities of earthly states be leveled out at God’s judgment (Saint Theophan the Recluse).”

As our nation’s congress faces critical decisions that will in all likelihood impact the lives of countless elderly and poor, it is right that we consider the teachings of the Orthodox Church concerning our duties to those who have less than we. Saint John Chrysostom taught that, “the poor are not the spectacle of human misery and suffering that evokes compassion or disgust, but they are the icons of Christ, the presence of Christ in the broken world.”

The compassionate sharing of our resources with those in need is a primal teaching of our Church and a virtue that must be practiced if we are to be true to the teachings of Our Lord. The communal nature of the Church was

taught by Saint Paul himself, and all who would call themselves Christians are obligated to be compassionate to those who lack basic resources to sustain their lives.

In an age when so many rich are resisting the possibility of increased taxation, we must remember that we are all, rich or poor, required by the Gospels to share with those around us. Christian nations from the time of Byzantium have taxed the wealthy in order to provide for the least of their people. The heretical teachings being floated about that abundance and prosperity are signs of a strong Christian faith, has infected many in our nation. They want to defend and protect the wealth of a few at the expense of those who have the least, as though the least among us deserve their station in life. The disparity between the very wealthy and the poor has never been this extreme in our nation’s history.

Almsgiving is so pivotal to our Christian faith, that it led Saint Basil the Great to exhort even the poor to share their meager goods with others. The Christian culture of compassion requires all of us to find ways to lift up the least among us. We cannot remain secure in our own well-being, while ignoring the needs of the poor and the elderly.

Saint John of Kronstadt in his First homily on the Beatitudes says: “Can wealthy people be poor in spirit? Of course they can, if they do not regard themselves as being great people only because they have perishable wealth and can do whatever they want with its help. How can they be poor in Spirit? They can when they sincerely recognize that their wealth — and the wealth of the whole world, for that matter — means nothing in comparison with the immortal soul, and that wealth is a gift from God not only to us but to our neighbors as well, for material surpluses are given to us to help the poor. When the wealthy recognize that with all their material treasures they are extremely poor and destitute in spirit, they will not be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life. (I Timothy 6:17-19).”

A compassionate heart leads to God as it places others above self. The rich man who values his money while ignoring the needs of the poor endangers his eternal life, for it is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. A wealthy Christian is a philanthropic man who cares for the poor and destitute and shares that which God has given him, thus storing up in heaven the treasures that are eternal.



Daily Reflection **Idle Words**

“O Lord and Master of my life, grant me not the spirit of idleness (ἀργίας, праздности), despondency, lust of power, and idle talk / idle words (ἀργο-λογία, праздное-словие).” (Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem, part 1)



It is important for us to talk and to share with one another our thoughts, sorrows, joys, and so on. No doubt about it. In fact I think we don’t do enough of that today, when we are so often “alone together,” even as a family, with each member staring into his or her computer/phone while sitting at the same table. Nonetheless, there is such a thing as “idle talk/words,” so let me reflect on that a bit. What is it?

Just like “idleness” (ἀργία, from ἀ-ἐργία, or “not doing”) means “not doing” what I am supposed to be doing, how, when and why I am supposed to be doing it, so does my “idle” use of words (ἀργο-λογία), whether spoken, written, or typed on my computer, mean my “not saying” what I am supposed to be saying, how, when and why I am supposed to be saying it, according to my vocation. So, “idle words” involve the inappropriate and untimely use of words, as well as their use with the wrong motivation. “Idle words” are always unconstructive, unproductive ones, which do more harm than good both to myself and others.

What are some of the “wrong” motivations for using words, and why are they harmful? I can, for example, “over-talk” about my certain aspirations or problems, out of self-assertion, self-justification, or self-pity. The harm in that is, I may be avoiding the silent contemplation of these issues; avoiding listening for the answers God may be sending me toward their further resolution, either through other people or otherwise. So I am blocking out the answers through my own words. I can similarly over-talk to God, motivated by the harmful assumption that my “many words” can or should manipulate His will. But my Lord warns me, “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words...” (Mt 6: 7)

So let me be reminded today of something I recently read (in the "Harvard Business Review," if you want to know). It's a bit of advice very useful in matters both practical and spiritual: "Silence is a greatly underestimated source of power... In silence, it can be easier to reach the truth." Let me stop my own words, when they cease to be of service, and become a bit more teachable, in silence and openness to God's voice in my life.

Holy Orthodox Quotes

"Blessed are those who have Christ as their heart's axis and joyfully revolve around His Holy Name."

+St. Paisios of Mount Athos

Philippians 1:20-21

According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.†

The Philokalia: Daily Readings

With all our strength let us hold fast to Christ, for there are always those who struggle to deprive our soul of His presence.

- St Philotheos of Sinai, 40 Texts on Watchfulness

Ancient Christian Wisdom

To repent is not to look downwards at my own shortcomings, but upwards at God's love, it is not to look backwards with self-reproach but forward with trustfulness, it is to see not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I might yet become.

+ St. John Climacus

Wisdom of the Church Fathers

"The world passes, only God remains!"

**+ Saint Venerable Theophanes the Confessor
(8th Century)**

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St Silouan The Athonite: Spiritual Father

"The Holy Spirit acts mystically through the spiritual father, and then when you go out from your spiritual father, the soul feels her renewal. But if you leave your spiritual father in a state of confusion, this means that you did not confess purely and did not forgive your brother all of his sins from your heart."

Orthodox Quote of the Day

(Paraphrasing St. John Chrysostom) He says that on the last day of a person's biological life "sins contort his soul", they stir up his soul. This refers to the passions which "move up from below the heart". The passions seek satisfaction, but the person cannot respond. It is a terrible state.

Hierotheos Vlakos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos

DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY
New Jersey Deanery - SOUTH
Lenten and Bright Week Vespers Schedule

Sunday, March 5 – 5:00pm

First Sunday of Great Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy

Saints Peter and Paul Church, 71 Whitehead Road, South River

Sunday, March 12 – 5:00pm

Second Sunday of Great Lent – St. Gregory Palamas

Mother of God Church, 904 Cherry Hill Road, Princeton

Sunday, March 19– 5:00pm

Third Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of the Cross

Church of the Holy Cross, 11 Wilkins Station Road, Medford

Sunday, March 26 – 5:00pm

Fourth Sunday of Great Lent – St. John Climacus

To Be Announced

Sunday, April 2 – 5:00pm

Fifth Sunday of Great Lent – St. Mary of Egypt

Saints Peter and Paul Church, 605 Washington Avenue, Manville

Wednesday, April 19 – 7:00pm

Bright Wednesday

Christ the Saviour Church, 365 Paramus Road, Paramus

Celebrant and Homilist: Archbishop MICHAEL

Fellowship and refreshments are available after every service

Freewill offerings to help fund the work of the deanery are accepted at every service

New Jersey Deanery SOUTH Parishes

Brick, *Annunciation Church* – Jackson, *Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church*

Manville, *Ss. Peter & Paul Church* – Mays Landing, *Church of the Mother of God*

Medford, *Church of the Holy Cross* - Perth Amboy, *St. Spiridon Church*

Princeton, *Holy Transfiguration Chapel* - Princeton, *Mother of God Joy of All Who Sorrow Church*

Rahway, *Holy Trinity Church* - South River, *Ss. Peter and Paul Church*

Trenton, *St. Vladimir Church*