



WEEKLY BULLETIN

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

*The 3rd Sunday of Great Lent,
April 4th, Tone 2, Mark 8:34-9:1*

Sunday of the Holy Cross

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 2

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell 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 Sunday of the Cross, Tone 1

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation.

The Lenten Fast

The Lenten season is inaugurated in the Church with the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:15-17). The message is proclaimed in the midst of the congregation: "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord".

According to the church hymns: "In the middle of the Fast, the all honorable tree calls in worship" all those who "worthily follow through their passion the passion of Christ", who in the first half of the Holy Forty Day Fast have fervently practiced asceticism in fasting and prayers, in repentance and cleansing from all impurities, in acts of love and good works. For those, the holy cross of Christ really serves with the most comfort and strongest encouragement for the continuation of their Lenten efforts, "easing their Lenten time".

But how and for what will they approach the life-giving cross of Christ in the course of the holy days of "the soul-pleasing Forty Day Fast" when they lead the usual sinful, vain, sensual life which, perhaps, even after holy confession and holy communion remain the same as before, with the same passions and with the same insensitivity and hardness of heart? How will they kiss the holy cross when during the holy days of the fast they strayed to the way of vice and yet have not taken the way to true repentance, the real struggle against their passions? How will they touch the pierced side of Christ, who in their heart and during the days the Lenten tenderness did not cease to be the source only of "evil desire, theft, usury, insult, cunning, temptation, shunning, abuse, arrogance, and foolishness"? How will those touch the holy tree, when their impure mouth opened only for idle talk and malicious gossip, for condemnation and slander, for grumbling and indignation? How will they look on the stretched body of Christ hanging on the cross, who with cowardice yielded to any need of the flesh, satisfied all whims, and were afraid to give up for themselves even the excessively fashionable food and clothes? Will they even worship the Crucified One on the cross? But then will their acts of worship be distinct from those genuflections, with which the warriors of Pilate fearlessly greeted the condemned Jesus on the cross? Will they even kiss the wounds of Christ? But would these kisses be better than the kiss of Judas?

So the negligence of people and the very saving suffering of Christ can turn into condemnation, and the word of comfort cross changes to a word of bitter accusations! So from the one cup of the eternal covenant, the Christian, faithful to his name, vigilant about his salvation, or renewed by true repentance, sings of life eternal; but those uncarrying about salvation, insensitive to the voice of the grace of God sings eternal condemnation! But the Holy Church offers the life-giving Cross of Christ also to the careless in hope that the beneficial power of the cross will also touch their heart and will urge them away from the deep sleep of the sinner. "They will respect my son" said the owner of the vineyard, sending his only son to the tenants who were grumbling against him (Mt. 21:37). "They will respect the wounds of the Son of God", as if thus the Holy Church speaks about her prodigal and disobedient children, offering them the sight of the life-giving cross of Christ. She hopes that the sight of the Divine Sufferer will remind the sinners, that as they were baptized into the death of Christ, they promised to serve the Lord instead of the world and the devil, to please God instead of their flesh, to obey the will of God instead of their lusts and passions.

Announcements and Activities

Lenten Vespers— Tuesday, at 6PM.

Presanctified Liturgy— will be served on Wednesday, April 7th at 6PM. Those desiring to receive Holy Communion should not eat or drink after their noon meal.

Memorial Saturday Liturgy—Saturday at 9AM.

Great Vespers—Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

40 years/ 40K Matching funds Mortgage Reduction Drive— Fr. Lawrence and your Parish Council introduced this marvelous goal at our parish feastday. The idea is to bring our mortgage down to under 100K, while marking our first 40 years of existence. We will use 20 K from reserve funds and seek to raise another 20K in matching funds. We will launch the Drive on PASCHA and conclude it on Sept. 1st. More later

Coffee Hours— as you know, the Archbishop blessed us to have social hour outside—weather permitting. Please check the Coffee Hour list for your name and day. Here's mine and council's recommendation for the time being: let's make it simple— bagles, with margarine or jams and coffee. You may add a soup, but it should be served by the person hosting. I say this because we are still serving and pouring with gloves and masks and it just makes it easy to set bread on a plate and to grab a cup of coffee. It also happens to fit with the Lenten rules. Remember, no meat, eggs, or dairy may be served at Coffee Hour until PASCHA on May 2nd. That includes such byproducts as whipped cream, milk chocolate, sour cream, etc. The simpler the fare, the easier will be the service.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)—battling cancer. Natalia—Olga's friend. Sunday's brother, Joe, ill. Chance— Kerri's nephew Emory—a young relative of Kirk and Kathy. Linda, Mary S.'s daughter. Sarah—the sister of John Deak who is battling cancer. Theresa, cancer, and husband Ron, the daughter-in-law and son of Linda D. Samir's friend, Johnny, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight. Anna J., who is battling health issues related to her bone marrow transplant and battle with Lyme Disease. Hanna— a friend of April's who has a brain injury. Darko— who had surgery for cancer and has to undergo chemo. Reposed Michael, Brian R.'s cousin. Barbara Ranjo, cancer surgery and recovering. David, newly reposed. Tony, health and an upcoming surgery. John, health. Dana and Era, two young women who are battling health issues. Carol, Mike Miller's friend. Julie, a friend of Katherine M. Michaela and family— Heather's friend battling cancer. George— Sunday's husband who has been battling health issues. Mara's dad, Ratp who recently had surgery. Fr. Paul Lazor, sometime dean of St. Vladimir Seminary reposed.. Vera— Newly-Reposed. Linda D. post surgery pain. Nicole, Aiden and Kate. Zoya, who lives in Russia and is suffering from the covid virus. Brian, Sunday's brother. George and Alex, health problems. Reposed Mel R. faithful member and husband of Marianne. Jerry— the husband of Elise, Katie and Anna R. Who passed last Thursday. Metropolitan Theodosius newly reposed. Reposed Darrel, Kyle's father. Diane F. recovering from Surgery. Erika and Family. And, finally, all those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the current Pandemic (which has been growing in numbers across the country and in the world), wildfires, hurricanes, and civil unrest. Jerry—Reposed. Don, Judy, Paul, Thomas, Marcella, Paul Reposed, friends of Karen and Scott T.; Donald, reposed, a relative of Stephen and Luci F. Archpriest Paul— battling kidney problems. Nicholas—Reposed, a person known by Heather. Macrina— a friend of Mike L. Archimandrite Alexander— Fr. Lawrence's long-time father confessor.

The Holy Church hopes that souls will be found though guilty, but not fallen into the depths of evil, not going towards the edge of hardness, by which a look at the instrument of the suffering of the Son of God will shakes the conscience, will prick the heart, will make the saving change of thoughts and feelings so that they will return from the temple as many returned from Golgotha, - "beating their breasts" (Lk. 23:48), and in their life from now on will go by the way of faith, repentance and Christian piety. (See details in "Full Collection of the Sermons of Demetrius, Archbishop of Chersonese, vol. 4, pages 324-326). They, as Ambrose of Milan teaches, should "grieve and cry, however not pushing to despair, because the One who has enlightened the eyes of the man blind from birth (Jn. 9), can make them both zealous and firm in His service if only they want to return with a pure heart. Therefore, let them recognize they are in their blindness and let them run to the Physician who can enlighten them". (taken from

S.V.Bulgakov's *Church Server's Handbook*)

From the Lives of the Saints... THE VENERABLE JOSEPH THE HYMNOGRAPHER

Joseph was born in Sicily of pious and virtuous parents, Plotinus and Agatha. After the death of his parents, Joseph moved to Thessalonica, where he was tonsured a monk. As a monk, he was a model to all in fasting, extreme abstinence, ceaseless prayer, chanting of the Psalms, vigils and labor. The bishop of Thessalonica ordained him a heironomk [priest-monk]. While visiting Thessalonica, the distinguished Gregory of Decapolis was so impressed with Joseph, because of his rare character, that he invited him to his monastery in Constantinople. When the flame of the iconoclastic heresy erupted again under Leo the Armenian, Joseph was sent to Rome to call upon the pope and the Roman Church to battle for Orthodoxy. While en route, Joseph was captured by pirates and taken to Crete, where the heretics detained him in prison for six years. Joseph rejoiced that he was made worthy to suffer for Christ, and for that he continually praised God, considering his iron chains as an adornment of gold. Early in the morning on the Feast of Christ's Nativity, in the sixth year of Joseph's imprisonment, the wicked Emperor Leo was slain in church while attending Matins. At that same moment, St. Nicholas appeared to Joseph in prison, saying: "Arise and follow me!" Joseph felt himself being elevated in the air and, all at once, found himself before the gates of Constantinople. All true believers rejoiced at his coming. He composed canons and hymns for many saints. He possessed the gift of clairvoyance [discernment], for which Patriarch Photius appointed him the spiritual father and confessor for priests, recommending him as "a man of God, an angel in the flesh and a father of fathers." In extreme old age, Joseph gave up his soul to the Lord, Whom he had faithfully served both in works and in hymns. He died peacefully on the eve of Holy and Great Thursday in the year 883 A.D.

Taken from the *Prologue of Orchrid*, compiled and written by St. Nikolai V.

2. THE HOLY MARTYR PHERBUTHA, HER WIDOWED SISTER AND THEIR SLAVE

During the reign of the Persian King Sapor (Saborius), St. Simeon the Bishop was slain. Pherbutha, the sister of Bishop Simeon, was taken to the palace at the wish of the queen. Pherbutha was exceptionally beautiful, and many suitors thronged to her, among whom were many pagan priests and soothsayers. Pherbutha rejected them all, provoking much anger against herself. At that time, the queen became ill, and all the pagan priests told the king that the queen had been poisoned by Pherbutha, and as a cure they recommended the following: that Pherbutha, her sister and their slave, all Christians, be sawn asunder and that three parts of their bodies be placed on one side and three parts on the other side and that the queen should be borne between them. The king agreed to the recommendation of these blood-thirsty pagan priests. Pherbutha, together with her sister and their slave, suffered for Christ in the year 343 A.D., thereby earning incorruptible wreaths in the Eternal Kingdom of their Lord.

Taken from the *Prologue of Ochrid*, by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)