

The Arena



Volume 1, Issue 6
August 2008

The Newsletter of
SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT MARTYR MISSION
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA

138 5th Avenue Kirkland, WA 98033
(425) 889 4558 info@stkatherine.org
Editor: Emily Lorelli ekslorelli@gmail.com

PASTOR'S COLUMN

by Father John Strickland

As the liturgical year wanes during course of August, the Church places one final Great Feast before us: the Dormition of the Holy Virgin Mary (August 15). This feast brings to a conclusion the annual cycle of Great Feasts that began early in September with the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (September 8). It thus serves as the second of two bookends, as it were, encompassing the entire experience of the Church's liturgical life. And this life is forever bringing us beyond our transitory existence into contact with eternal life. In fact, the Dormition claims through its hymnography to be a feast of "life," the way through which the Virgin has acquired complete and eternal union with her son the Giver of Life.

And yet is it not a paradox that the Dormition commemorates her "falling asleep," her death?

The hymns for it have us accompany the Apostles to her deathbed and experience with them her departure from this world. They remind us that every instance of death is in a real sense an unfathomable tragedy. Every death is a loss of something good, something precious to us.

Of course we know, as the Apostles did when they gathered at the Virgin's deathbed, that Christ has overcome death through his Cross and Resurrection. We are familiar with scriptural claims about this victory, such as the words of Saint Paul: "O death where is thy sting; O hell where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:55). It is precisely these words that Saint John Chrysostom quotes in the Paschal Homily each year immediately before declaring that "Christ is risen!"

Nevertheless, when we encounter death we often cannot help but feel in the

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

Pastor's Column	1
Parish & Local Events	3
Catechetical Challenges	3
The Little Church	4
Lives of the Saints	5
Wisdom of the Fathers	6
The Orthodox Faith	6
Hymnography	8
Troparia & Kontakia	8
Name Days	12
Prayer Requests	12

depths of our heart a great disturbance, a great sorrow. Why is this? Perhaps it is because we have yet to assimilate fully the Gospel of Life given to us by the Church. We have yet to assimilate those hard sayings of Jesus, such as: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). The Gospel teaches us that our destiny does not belong to this age and the experience (or "life") that goes with it, however dear it is to us. This is certainly not to say that the experiences of this world are necessarily evil. They are not. In fact, if they are placed within the life of the Church and sanctified by it, they are good. But when they become an end in themselves, things we cannot peacefully live without, they become stumbling blocks to our entrance into eternal life. As painfully cross-like as it is to do so, we must always try to cultivate a degree of detachment from exactly those things that are such a cause of pleasure and even joy to us in this world.

The feast of the Dormition helps us to do this. It reveals to us the completion of a perfect life, that of the Theotokos. It is one in which nothing transitory became a cause of attachment to this world. All of her life had been concentrated upon communion with God through her son Jesus Christ. It was therefore not a death, but a "falling asleep." And for this reason, the Apostles, gathered together to witness her transition into heaven, did not lament. According to the hymns we sing at the feast, they in fact rejoiced at her departure. What else could they do? For by holding fast to the Gospel of Life, they understood that the falling asleep of the greatest of all the saints represented in truth the victory over death.



PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

August 1-14 : Dormition Fast

August 4 – 8: Vacation Church School – 9:30-11:30am

August 5: Festal Vigil for Transfiguration – 7pm

August 6: Diving Liturgy for Transfiguration – 7am

August 7: Inquirer Course – 7pm

August 12: Bible Study – 7pm

August 14 : Festal Vigil for Dormition – 7pm

August 15: Divine Liturgy for Dormition – 7am

August 20: Parish Council – 7pm

August 21: Inquirer Course – 7pm

August 29: Strict Fast – Beheading of St. John the Baptist

August 31: Vespers for Eve of Indiction

Sept. 6: St. Katherine's 10 Year Anniversary Picnic

- Liturgy – 9:30am (with Fr. Timothy Perry)
- Picnic – noon

September 7: Vespers for Nativity of the Theotokos – 7pm

September 8: Liturgy for Nativity of the Theotokos – 7am

CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?).

- Liturgical challenge: What is stamped into the top of every prosphora, or loaf of bread used for the Holy Eucharist?
- Scriptural challenge: Who appeared in conversation with Jesus at his Transfiguration?
- Historical challenge: Where was the first council of the Orthodox Church held, and who attended it?

Answers to July challenges:

- The First Kathisma (Ps. 1-8) is read or sung at Vespers for Saturday evening because that service is the first service of Sunday, the first day of the week. (The Church reads the entire Psalter during the course of the week, and then begins anew Saturday).
- The Sermon on the Mount is located in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5-8.
- Approximately fifty percent of the parishes in the Diocese of the West of the Orthodox Church in America are missions.

THE LITTLE CHURCH

by Patty Rebne

This new feature, "The Little Church," is intended to provide our parish with practical encouragement in bringing the Church home. I don't have the answers—I just have the questions! I've asked them of people in this and other parishes, and their responses have been helpful. Many times, their response has been, "I don't know—but please tell me what you find out!" So, that is the purpose of this column.

Please let me know of questions (of a practical nature) that you would like answered. And when you read the ideas people suggest, if you have one of your own, please let me know. You can email me at patty_r@comcast.net. You can even say, "Don't tell anyone that I was the one that said this!" and I will honor your request.

This month, let's take a look at prayer, from a practical point of view. Orthodox teaching about prayer at its most basic level is consistent and clear: Pray! The general agreement is that you should find (or be given by a Spiritual Father or Mother) a rule of prayer that can be kept faithfully. ("Shorter and said" is better than "elaborate and ignored".) Orthodox prayer books are full of prayers written by holy people; these prayers teach us how to pray even while we pray. Find a prayer book or rule that you can keep and then stick with it. Don't shop around looking for a "better rule". Be faithful in saying your prayers.

Here are a few practical hints that people said helped them keep a prayer rule.

1. Say your prayers and time how long it takes you. It is often very easy at the beginning of a busy day or the end of a wearying day to fall prey to the temptation that "it is just too much" to say prayers on top of it all. But when you know that it only takes ___ minutes, it puts things in proportion.
2. Set a specific time to say prayers, either by the clock ("at 7:30 a.m.") or relative to another activity ("after dinner").
3. Say some prayers as a family, some alone.
4. Sometimes an intercession list (people you pray for) can become so long that you become discouraged in the length of time it will take to pray for everyone and not pray at all. In this case, either prune the intercession list, or take the list and divide it between morning and evening; or between even and odd days; or days of the week.
5. Let everyone in the family have a say in adding people to the intercession list, even "on the fly" in the middle of the prayers.
6. Enter the intercessions portion of your prayers into your word processor so you can update it weekly or monthly. Give each person a copy to pray from.
7. Put pictures of people you pray for near your prayer corner. This helps you remember them and makes it more personal than a name on a list might be.
8. If you say the prayers from the Jordanville Prayer Book, you can say them along with a monk via CD. This gives you the freedom to look at the icons (or to look at the road!) while you say your prayers. It also helps you learn how to chant the prayers.
9. Remember from time to time to make time to say additional prayers outside your prayer rule...prayers for the sick, the widowed, the reposed, or for help in time of suffering. Still, keep your daily rule.

These are a few suggestions—it is very likely that you have more. Send them along—they might show up in a future column. Remember that no one here is pretending to have a perfect prayer life, but if we can find ways to encourage one another to have a better prayer life, that is a gift to us all.

Here is my question for next month: “We brought home holy water and holy oil. Now what?” I would like very much to hear from members of our parish—or other parishes—what they do with holy water and holy oil in their own Little Churches.



THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

St. Herman of Alaska: Commemorated August 9th

St. Herman was born in the town of Serpukhov in the Moscow Diocese around 1756. At the age of 16, he entered the monastic life at the Trinity-St. Sergius Hermitage near St. Petersburg. While here he developed a severe throat infection from which he nearly died. After fervent prayer before an ikon of the Theotokos, he fell into a deep sleep. During this sleep, He dreamed that he was healed by the Virgin and upon waking, he had completely recovered. A few years later he moved to the Valaam Monastery on Lake Ladoga.

While at Valaam, he was under the spiritual guidance of the Elder Nazary who had played a significant role in the revitalization of Spiritual life in Russia after the decline of spirituality which resulted from the interference in Church life on the part of Peter the great and Catherine the great. At this time Gregory Shelikov, head of the Golikov-Shelikov Company - licensed to exploit the resources of Alaska - visited Valaam and requested monks to work in a new Alaskan mission. Father Herman was among the eight monks selected.

The monks arrived on Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794, and immediately set out on the task of educating and converting the natives. Eventually only Fr. Herman survived from this original mission.

The members of the mission felt that it was their duty to protect the Alaskans from harm and exploitation. They defended them against the often cruel treatment of the Russian-American Company which controlled the colony under the leadership of Alexander Baranov. As a result of their protests, and because they tried to place the natives under imperial protection by administering an oath of allegiance to the Czar to them, Baranov threatened the monks with physical violence and even placed them under house arrest.

Sometime between 1808 and 1818, Fr. Herman went to Spruce Island, which he called "New Valaam". He spent the rest of his life on the island, where he cared for orphans, ran a school and continued his missionary work. He lived the ascetic life of Orthodox Monasticism which has been standard since the time of the desert fathers. He built a small chapel, school and guest house. Food for himself and the orphans was produced from his own experimental garden. He wore the simplest clothing and cell was practically empty. His life was devoted to prayer and to following the services he could do as a simple monk who had not been ordained.

His love for the native peoples grew continually. His greatest pleasure was being with the children under his care. When a ship from the United States brought an epidemic to the Alaskans, he remained with those stricken with disease constantly comforting the dying and praying with them. His love grew to the point that he could see into the hearts of his spiritual children and help them.

The natives regarded him as their intercessor before God. When there was a tidal wave on the Island, Fr. Herman took an ikon of the Theotokos, place it on the beach and assured the people that the water would not rise beyond the place where the ikon was, and it did not. When there was a great fire on the island, he dug a trench and stayed the flames.

Prior to his death he foretold that there would be no priest to bury him and that he would be forgotten for 30 years. He died on December 12, 1837, and was forgotten until the first investigation of his life in 1867 by Bishop Peter of Alaska. This investigation was followed by publications of his life in 1894, 1900, and 1952. In 1952 an Akathist Hymn was composed, and on March 11, 1969, the Great Council of Bishops solemnly proclaimed the Act of the Universal Church Canonization of the Staretz Herman to Sainthood in the Orthodox Church in America: "Taking into consideration the long and undisputed witness of the grace of God, appearing through the servant of God, the Staretz Herman of Alaska." The Canonization was performed on August 7 - 9, 1970.

WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

Saint Gregory Palamas, *On the Dormition*

What words can describe your divinely-radiant beauty, O Virgin Mother of God? We cannot circumscribe you in our words and thoughts, for everything about you surpasses our speech and understanding. But, with your loving permission, we may sing your praises. In you all graces find a place. You are the fullness of everything noble and good, a living picture and icon of all goodness and kindness, for you alone were found worthy of the gifts of the Spirit in their entirety, or rather, you alone had mysteriously dwelling in your womb him in Whom all these gifts were stored. In a way past understanding, you became his Tabernacle, and now through death you proceed hence to immortality, and are fittingly translated from earth to heaven, to live with him forever in the heavenly tabernacles. From there you care for your inheritance, and by your unsleeping intercessions you reconcile us to your Son.

THE ORTHODOX FAITH

An excerpt from Fr. Hopko's *The Orthodox Faith: Doctrine, Volume I*

Sources of Christian Doctrine: Bible

The written record of God's revelation is the **Bible**, which means the book, or the books. The Bible is also called the **Holy Scriptures**. Scripture as a word simply means writings.

The Bible was written over thousands of years by many different people. It is divided into two **testaments** or **covenants**. These words signify agreements, pacts, or we might say, "deals." The two basic covenants are the old and the new; each has its own scriptures. As a book, the Bible contains many different kinds of writings: law, prophecy, history, poetry, stories, aphorisms, prayers, letters and symbolical visions.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament scripture begins with the five books of the **Law** called the **Pentateuch**, which means the five books; also called the **Torah**, which means the Law. Sometimes these books are also called the **Books of Moses** since they are centered on the exodus and the Mosaic laws.

In the Old Testament there are also books of the history of Israel; books called the **Wisdom** books such as the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Book of Job; and books of the prophecies which carry the names of the Old Testament prophets. A **prophet** is one who speaks the Word of God by direct divine inspiration. Only secondarily does the word prophet mean one who foretells the future.

The Orthodox Church also numbers among the genuine books of the Old Testament the so-called **apocryphal** books, meaning literally the secret or hidden writings. Other Christians put these books in a secondary place or reject completely their being of divine inspiration.

The New Testament

The center of the New Testament part of the Bible is the four **gospels** of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John who are called the four **evangelists**, which means those who wrote the gospels. Gospel in Greek is evangelion which, as we have seen, means the "glad tidings" or the "good news."

In the New Testament scripture there is also the book of the **Acts of the Apostles**, written by St. Luke. There are fourteen letters called the **epistles** (which simply means letters) of the Apostle Paul, though perhaps some, such as the **Letter to the Hebrews**, were not written directly by him. Three letters are also ascribed to the Apostle John; two to the Apostle Peter; and one each to the Apostles James and Jude. Finally there is the **Book of Revelation**, also called the **Apocalypse**, which is ascribed to St. John as well.

For the Orthodox, the Bible is the main written source of divine doctrine since God Himself inspired its writing by His Holy Spirit (see 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:20). This is the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible, namely that men inspired by God wrote the words which are truly their own human words -- all words are human! -- but which nevertheless may be called all together the Word of God. Thus, the Bible is the Word of God in written form because it contains not merely the thoughts and experiences of men, but the very self-revelation of God.

The center of the Bible as the written Word of God in human form is the person of the Living Word of God in human form, Jesus Christ. All parts of the Bible are interpreted in the Orthodox Church in the light of Christ since everything in the Bible leads up to Christ and speaks about Him (Lk 24: 44). This fact is symbolized in the Orthodox Church by the fact that only the book of the four gospels is enthroned on the altars of our churches and not the entire Bible. This is so because everything in the Bible is fulfilled in Christ.

HYMNOGRAPHY: AUGUST

Troparion from Ode Five of the Second Canon for Transfiguration Matins

Thou, O Christ, with invisible hands hast fashioned man in thine image; and thou hast now displayed the original beauty in this same human body formed by thee, revealing it, not as in an image, but as thou art in thine own self according to thine essence, being both God and man.

Hymn at Glory . . . Now and Ever at the Aposticha for Dormition Vespers

At thy departing, O Virgin Theotokos, to him who was ineffably born of thee, James the first bishop and brother of the Lord was there, and was Peter, the honored leader and chief of the disciples, and the whole sacred fellowship of the apostles. In discourses that showed forth heavenly things they sang the praise of the divine and amazing mystery of the dispensation of Christ our God; and they rejoiced, O far-famed Virgin, as they buried thy body, the origin of the Life and holder of God. On high the most holy and venerable of the angelic powers bowed in wonder before this marvel, and said one to another: "Open wide your gates and received her who bore the Creator of heaven and earth. With songs of praise let us glorify her precious and holy body, dwelling place of the Lord on whom we may not gaze." Therefore we too, as we keep thy feast, cry out to thee, O far-famed Lady: Raise up the Christian horn and save our souls.

TROPARIA & KONTAKIA: AUGUST

August 1

Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-giving Cross of the Lord

Troparion - Tone 1

O Lord, save Your people,
And bless Your inheritance!
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
Over their adversaries.
And by virtue of the Cross,
Preserve Your habitation!

Kontakion - Tone 4

As You were voluntarily crucified for our sake,
Grant mercy to those who are called by Your name;
Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Your power,
Granting them victories over their adversaries,
By bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Your weapon of peace!

August 3

Venerable Dalmatus, Isaac, and Faustus of the Dalmatian Monastery

Troparion - Tone 4

O God of our Fathers,
always always act with kindness towards us;
take not Your mercy from us,
but guide our lives in peace
through the prayers of Venerable Isaac, Dalmátus, and Faustus.

Kontakion - Tone 2

Through asceticism you shone like lights in the world
and by your faith you overthrew heresies.

We praise you with hymns, Isaac, Dalmátus, and Faustus,
as servants of Christ who are praying for us all.

August 6

The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Troparion - Tone 7

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God,
revealing Your glory to Your disciples as far as they could bear it.
Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners,
through the prayers of the Theotokos.
O Giver of Light, glory to You!

Kontakion - Tone 7

On the Mountain You were Transfigured, O Christ God,
And Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they could see it;
So that when they would behold You crucified,
They would understand that Your suffering was voluntary,
And would proclaim to the world,
That You are truly the Radiance of the Father!

August 9

Glorification of the Venerable Herman of Alaska

Troparion - Tone 7

Joyful North Star of the Church of Christ,
Guiding all people to the Heavenly Heavenly Kingdom;
Teacher and apostle of the True Faith;
Intercessor and defender of the oppressed;
Adornment of the Orthodox adornment of the Orthodox Church in America:
Blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
Pray to our Lord Jesus Christ
For the salvation of our souls!

Troparion - Tone 4

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
North star of Christ's holy Church,
The light of your holy life and great deeds
Guides those who follow the Orthodox way.
Together we lift high the Holy Cross
You planted firmly in America.
Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,
Singing his holy Resurrection.

Kontakion - Tone 3

The eternal light of Christ our Savior
guided you, blessed Father Herman,
on your evangelical your evangelical journey to America
to proclaim the Gospel of peace.
Now you stand before the throne of glory;
intercede for your land and its people:
Peace for the world and salvation for our souls!

August 10

Martyr and Archdeacon Laurence of Rome

Troparion - Tone 4

Victorious martyr of Christ our God,
by the sign of the Cross you gave sight to the blind;
you distributed the riches of the Church to the poor;
you were tried by fire and no evil was found in you.
As you endured the burning,
may your prayers extinguish the flames of our many sins,
blessed Archdeacon Lawrence!

Kontakion - Tone 2

Your heart burned with divine fire
as the flames of the passions died within you.
God-bearing martyr Lawrence, the pillar of those who struggle,
you cried out in the midst of your contest:
"Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ."

August 15

The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary

Troparion - Tone 1

In giving birth you preserved your virginity,
In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos.
You were translated to life, O Mother of Life,
And by your prayers, you deliver our souls from death.

Kontakion - Tone 2

Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos,
Who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions.
For being the Mother of Life,
She was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.

August 17

Martyr Myron the Presbyter of Cyzicus

Troparion - Tone 4

Your holy martyr, Myron, O Lord,
through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God.
For having Your strength, he laid low his adversaries,
and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.
Through his intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion - Tone 2

From childhood you longed for Christ, all-glorious one,
keeping His divine commandments and running to Him with all your being, all-
honored Myron.
Now you zealously pray with the angels,
asking remission of sins
for those who celebrate your memory.

August 24

Hieromartyr Eutyches the Disciple of St. John the Theologian

Troparion - Tone 4

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles,
you became a successor to their throne.

Through the practice of virtue,
you found the way to divine contemplation, O inspired one of God;
by teaching the word of truth without error,
you defended the Faith, even to the shedding of your blood.
Hieromartyr Eutychius, entreat Christ God to save our souls.

Kontakion - Tone 3

A successor of the Apostles and an excellent example to bishops,
Eutychius, you were glorified as a martyr.
You shone forth like the sun enlightening all,
dispelling the dark night of godlessness.
Therefore, we honor you as truly a godly celebrant of the Mysteries of Christ.

August 29

The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John

Troparion - Tone 2

The memory of the righteous is celebrated with hymns of praise,
but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner.
You were shown in truth to be the most honorable of the prophets,
for you were deemed worthy to baptize in the streams of the Jordan Him whom
they foretold.

Therefore, having suffered for the truth with joy,
you proclaimed to those in hell God who appeared in the flesh,
who takes away the sin of the world, and grants us great mercy.

Kontakion - Tone 5

The glorious beheading of the Forerunner,
became an act of divine dispensation,
for he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior.
Let Herodias lament, for she entreated lawless murder,
loving not the law of God, nor eternal life,
but that which is false and temporal.

August 31

The Placing of the Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God

Troparion - Tone 8

Ever-Virgin Theotokos, protectress of mankind,
you have given your people a powerful legacy:
the robe and sash of your most honored body which remained
incorrupt throughout your seedless childbearing;
for through you time and nature are renewed!
Therefore we implore you: "Grant peace to your people and to our souls great
mercy!"

Kontakion - Tone 4

Today your flock celebrates the enshrinement of your precious sash,
and it earnestly cries out to you:
"Rejoice, O Virgin, boast of all Christians!"

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – AUGUST

August 15th – Marie Pylypczuk (Most Holy and Ever-virgin Mary)

August 18th – Flore Lekanof (Holy Martyr Florus)

August 20th – Ransom Samuel Cutshall (Prophet Samuel)

August 30th – Alik Knowlton (Saint Alexander Nevsky)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please keep the following people in your prayers this month:

LIVING:

Charles

Robert

Mark

Sarah

David

Patricia

Flore

Allan Simeon

Emily and the child to be born of her

Olga and the child to be born of her

David

Cat. Deborah

Naheda

Patricia

Arne

Child Ben

Nika and the child to be born of her

Nicholas

Tatiana

Barbara

DEPARTED:

ND Child Victoria

If you would like to add a name to the prayer list, please email Emily Lorelli at ekslorelli@gmail.com; your request will appear in the next newsletter.