

The Arena



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NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

Pastor's Column	1
Parish & Local Events	3
Catechetical Challenges	5
The Little Church	6
Readings and Ramblings	7
Lives of the Saints	11
Wisdom of the Fathers	13
The Orthodox Faith	15
Hymnography	17
Name Days	20
Prayer Requests	20

"All who love the martyrs, raise up a divine and worthy hymn, honoring the most wise Katherine, for she preached Christ in the arena"

Kontakion to Saint Katherine

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

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PASTOR'S COLUMN

by Father John Strickland

The Great Fast culminates with the week of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection. Initially the "feast of feasts" that is our Lord's Pascha was commemorated in a three-day cycle, and the entire range of events in the Passion and the Resurrection were contained within it. With time, however, the Church began to elaborate the various facets of Pascha into what we now know as Passion Week, and to expand the liturgical calendar around it.

In fact, it is this single week, taken as a whole, that the lenten Forty Days are designed to prepare us for. The lenten journey really culminates at its beginning, and not, as one might otherwise think, on the Sunday of Pascha itself. For while it is true that we continue fasting until Easter Sunday is reached, the lenten journey is about more than fasting from food and the process of repentance that fasting and other ascetical struggles is designed to produce is what brings us to the point at which we can participate fully in the whole experience of Pascha—both the Passion and the Resurrection. Only after "having completed the Forty Days that bring profit to our soul" (as we sing at the Presanctified Liturgy on the Friday before the week begins), are we prepared to behold the redemption of the human race worked by Jesus Christ in these glorious events.

Having completed those Forty Days, then, we are prepared (quoting a better

known hymn sung at Matins during the first half of Passion Week itself) to “behold the Bridegroom.” The fact that the Church uses the title “Bridegroom” in connection with Passion Week is paradoxical, but significant. Throughout the Old Testament, God characterized his relationship to his people in this way. “As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,” declared Isaiah, “so the Lord shall rejoice over you” (Is. 62:5). God’s joy in our communion with him is presented to us scripturally as the joy of a husband longing for his bride. In the Song of Songs, he is represented as gazing at his beloved amidst the flowers in a garden at springtime:

My beloved is as a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bethel. Behold, he stands behind our wall, looking through the windows and peering through the lattices. My beloved answers and says to me, “Rise up and come, my companion, my fair one, my dove. For behold, the winter is past . . . And the vines are in bloom and give forth their fragrance. . . . Show me your face, and cause me to hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is beautiful.” (Song of Songs, 2:9-11, 13-14).

It is of course the purpose of the Great Fast to make our spiritual faces beautiful for our Bridegroom through the cleansing of heartfelt repentance, the way great saints such as Mary of Egypt (whom we commemorate the sixth Sunday of the Fast) did. And yet we often reach the end of the Fast having failed to make full use of it. Often repentance has scarcely begun and we continue to see within ourselves the darkness of sin. For many of us, perhaps, we have not even begun to repent.

Marvelously, however, even if we fail to repent and to make ourselves beautiful we are told that God’s love for us burns all the same. In the case of Hosea, for instance, the Prophet was told to humble himself and chase after his unfaithful, adulterous wife Gomer as a sign of God’s self-emptying love for his people, even in their sins (Hos. 1-3). The divine bridegroom, we are told, will never cease his efforts to win us to himself.

In the New Testament, the fulfillment of God’s longing for his people is proclaimed in the person of Jesus Christ. He himself even took on the title when he spoke in parables such as that of the virgins who keep vigil awaiting the Bridegroom at midnight (Matt. 25:1-13). It is precisely this Gospel passage that we hear at Matins of Holy Wednesday, and which provides the content for the Troparion “Behold the Bridegroom.” (It also happens to be the Gospel appointed in the Greek tradition for Matins at the feast of Saint Katherine the Great Martyr, who, as we sing every Sunday, “hastened to the heavenly bridal chamber to stand with the angels before the Bridegroom”).

And what is perhaps most astonishing, our Bridegroom Christ comes to us during Passion Week arrayed not in earthly glory, but humility. As the Bridegroom icon proclaims, his wedding robe is the purple of mockery and his wedding crown is of thorns. In fact, some Orthodox theologians have gone so far as to say that the consummation of his relationship to his beloved people occurs on the bed of the Cross. For only through dying in the flesh and rising from the dead himself, could the great Lover of Man rescue us from our self-imposed death and restore us to the eternal garden of Paradise.

This is the image of our Lord the Church offers us as we enter the final week of the Great Fast. And it is complemented by the image she puts before us as it reaches its ultimate conclusion. In the icon of the Resurrection known as the Descent of Our

Lord into Hell we see the Bridegroom, having “trampled down death by death,” reaching out with love to Adam and Eve (and therefore to us) who formerly lay dead in the tomb, and raising us up in an eternal embrace. In the face of such an unspeakable and divine love, let us also hasten with love to meet our Lord during the week of his Pascha.

1 PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

- April 1:** Confessions 3-6pm
Matins w/ Canon of St. Andrew @ 7pm
- April 2:** Bible Study (*Journey to the Kingdom*, Chapters 24-25) @ 7pm
- April 3:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
followed by a Lenten meal and the Akathist to Theotokos.
- April 4:** Catechesis @4pm
Great Vespers @ 6pm
- April 5:** 5th Sunday of Lent: St. Mary of Egypt – Divine Liturgy @ 9:30
- April 8:** Confessions 3-5pm
Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
- April 9:** Studies in Orthodox Tradition (New Martyrdom in Russia) @ 7pm
- April 10:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
- April 11:** Lazarus Saturday
Catechesis @4pm
Festal Vigil @ 6pm
- April 12:** Palm Sunday – Divine Liturgy @ 9:30
Bridegroom Matins @ 6pm
- April 13-14:** Great and Holy Monday & Tuesday
Bridegroom Matins @ 7pm
- April 15:** Great and Holy Wednesday
Holy Thursday Matins @ 7pm
- April 16:** Great and Holy Thursday
Vespers and Divine Liurgy (Basil) @ 9am followed by Lenten meal
Matins w/ 12 Passion Gospels @ 7pm
- April 17:** Great and Holy Friday
Royal Hours@ 9am
Vespers with Rite of Entombment for Holy Saturday @ 2pm
Matins with Procession for Holy Saturday @ 7pm
All-Night Psalm Vigil follows
- April 18:** Great and Holy Saturday
Vespers and Divine Liurgy (Basil) @ 1pm
Reading of the Acts of the Apostles begins afterward (see sign-up sheet)
Baptism of Deborah Mary Turner, 5:00 pm

Nocturne, 11:30 pm

April 19: Holy Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord
Paschal Procession, Paschal Matins, and Divine Liturgy @12am
Agape Meal follows
Paschal Vespers @ 2pm, children's party follows

April 20: Bright Monday
Hours and Paschal Divine Liturgy with Cross Procession @ 9am

April 24: Paschal Hours and Vespers @ 7pm

April 25: Bright Saturday/Apostle Mark
Hierarchical Paschal Divine Liturgy @ Holy Resurrection, Tacoma @ 9:30am
Great Vespers at St. Katherine @ 6pm

April 26: Thomas Sunday – Divine Liturgy @ 9:30

April 30: Studies in Orthodox Tradition (America Mission) @ 7pm

May 3: Sunday of the Myrrhbearers – Divine Liturgy @ 9:30

the Best of the Mission's Kitchens:

Recipes for Feasting and Fasting

A publication of St. Katherine the Great Martyr Mission, Orthodox Church of America

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I am writing to tell you about the creation of a parish cookbook and to ask for your help. The cookbook, currently titled *The Best of the Mission's Kitchens: Recipes for Feasting and Fasting*, will be a collection of St. Katherine's parishioners' tried and tasty recipes.

Whenever one of the fasts prescribed by the church rolls around each year, I find that I return to the same favorite recipes, yet would love to expand my repertoire. Likewise, at the end of the fast when we're feasting, there are certain meals my family always requests, yet I would love to find new feasting favorites. Almost every Sunday, I'm intrigued and delighted by the variety of delicious foods that come out of our parishioners' kitchens. How many of us have asked for or wanted to ask for the recipe for a particular dish?

Each of us has in our collection of recipes: our favorite dishes, our trusty stand-bys, and our family heirlooms. This cookbook will be a collection of our best, which once collected, can be shared with each other at St. Katherine's, with family and friends, and with the Northwest Orthodox Christian community.

Before we can share them, we must first collect them. This is where we need your help. **We are asking each family to submit at least two (but would love more) of their favorite fasting and/or feasting recipes. Please include any interesting stories or comments about the recipe and a picture of the final dish if possible.** (Digital photos would be best but are not required.) Right now is the perfect time as we are currently making our favorite fasting meals and will soon be preparing our favorite feasting dishes for Pascha. Please take a moment to type up the recipe, write its history or interesting anecdote, and take a picture. Then email it to

ekslorelli@gmail.com or give them to me at church. They need not come all at once, but can be submitted over the next few months as you have the opportunity. We would like to have them by the end of May if possible.

Once they are collected and formatted, the recipes will be put in a digital format, burned onto CD, and made available for purchase. **All proceeds from the cookbook sales will go to the St. Katherine Building Fund.** We hope to make *The Best of the Mission's Kitchens* available by this year's Dormition fast.

Thank you in advance for your participation, which will help make this very special parish-wide project a reality. May God bless this endeavor and continue to bless all of us this Lenten season.

Love in Christ, Emily Lorelli

p.s. If you have any particularly good quotes regarding fasting, feasting, or food in general, would you please email them to ekslorelli@gmail.com; they may end up in the cookbook as well.

KOLIVA

2lbs wheat berries (Fred Meyer carries them in bulk)
1 tsp salt
1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs or crumbled
Zwieback toast
2 cups chopped walnuts
2 cups honey
4 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground cloves
2 tsp ground cardamom
2 cups raisins
1/2 cup sesame seeds, browned
confectioner's sugar
almonds for decoration



Soak wheat in a large pot of water overnight. In the morning, drain and cover with fresh water. Cook about 2 1/2 - 3 hours on low until tender. Stir often to prevent sticking, adding more water as necessary. Drain in colander and rinse with water. Drain well and spread on paper towels or large cloth to absorb moisture. (This may take several hours or overnight.) Mix together honey and spices. In a large bowl, mix wheat, honey mixture, sesame seeds, walnuts and raisins. Mound mixture on serving platter. Cover with crumbs making sure it is completely covered. Next sift confectioner's sugar on top, again covering completely. Decorate with almonds, forming a border all around and a cross in the middle.

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

1. At the conclusion of the Epistle reading assigned for Vespers on Holy Friday, Saint Paul declares that he determined "not to know any thing among you, save . . ." --what?

2. What happens at the Vespereal Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday immediately after the singing of "Arise O God and Judge the Earth" and the changing of all the colors to white?
3. What does the Gospel reading of the Vespereal Divine Liturgy on Holy Saturday have in common with the Gospel reading for Baptisms?

Answers for April on back page.

✝ THE LITTLE CHURCH

by Patty Rebne

"The Little Church" means to give our parish practical encouragement in bringing the Church home. I don't have the answers—I have a lot of questions! If you have topics you would like to read about, or suggestions for the "answers", send them along. I will include them in the next column. My email address is patty.r@comcast.net.

Orthodox Christians hold to the faith handed down from the apostles, teaching what we were taught from one generation to the next. A large part of the teaching of Holy Tradition is given to us through the Holy Scriptures. We hear the Scriptures chanted at every liturgical service, the words of the Bible in liturgical prayers. We can prepare our hearts to better understand what we are praying and reading if we read the Bible in our homes. Let's look at some ways to bring the Scriptures to the Little Church.

The Church has prepared a lectionary—a schedule of daily Bible reading—for the faithful. The St. Katherine calendars have the readings listed on each day. On most days, the reading takes less than 15 minutes. If you find that this is not workable, make an effort to read the Gospel or the Psalm for each day. Or, every day, read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday; this preparation will enrich your hearing of the Gospel and Father John's homiletic reflection on it.

If you want a "power assist", the *Orthodox Study Bible* presents notes, commentary, articles and other assistance to help us acquire the teaching of the Orthodox faith—this is especially helpful to converts (like me) who have a lifetime of non-Orthodox teaching but are asking God to give us an Orthodox approach to the Bible.

If you have young children, focus on the stories of the Bible. Children are wired to receive stories. One option is to read a good Bible story book. *The Golden Children's Bible* tells the stories with rich and interesting language and illustrations (not icons). This is available for about \$13 from Amazon. The older *Egermeier's Bible Story Book* is also quite good; later editions have hyper-edited some of the stories and greatly simplified the language; used copies from the 1960s are readily available. (I read the covers off my *Egermeier's* when I was a kid. I still have it, complete with the pencil remark that the Rich Man and Lazarus was my favorite story.)

A Bible story book makes it easier to navigate the Old Testament stories, but it is not absolutely necessary. The Gospels and Acts can be read to children straight from the New King James or other versions earlier than you might think. These books are full of great stories! And when you have read them all...read them again. And again. Just keep going until the children are about middle-school

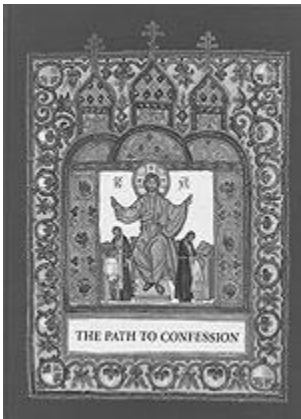
age. Then children can start to take in the epistles. People of all ages can hear the Psalms and Proverbs read straight from the Bible, as well. Keep it short and sweet and read only as long as they are still begging for more. Don't belabor it. Read the notes in the OSB, as well. I always sing a little "la" to indicate that it is the beginning and then the end of a "note" (ha-ha) to keep it clear what is and is not Scripture.

Older teens and adults sometimes benefit by using a book alongside the Scriptures. St. Katherine Bookstore has many titles that will guide you through a specific passage, or through a particular topic addressed in multiple passages of Scripture. Our Bible study has used one that took us through the Psalms, then through the Sunday Gospel readings, and next, we will tackle the Beatitudes through Jim Forest's *The Ladder of the Beatitudes*.

Who among us will fully absorb the contents of the Bible? Not one. That's not the goal. Instead, take a little piece every day and let a little bit soak in and become part of your life. A few minutes a day can make a big difference over a lifetime.

READINGS AND RAMBLINGS

****This is a new column designed to present your contributions. As the title suggests, this column will contain everything from suggested reading and book reviews to topics of personal and communal interest, such as this month's article about how and why we ask for the Bishop's blessing. In short, this column is what we, the parishioners of St. Katherine Mission, want it to be. Please email submissions to Emily Lorelli – ekslorelli@gmail.com.****



THE PATH TO CONFESSION by Artemy Vladimirov
(Author), G. A. Skotina (Illustrator)

A book review by Fr. Anthony Karbo

"Here before you, my young friends, is a curious book. It was written for children but grown-ups may also find it interesting."

A priest is often asked to prescribe spiritual reading beneficial for the soul, particularly during the season of the Great Fast now upon us. There exists now in English an abundance of books to choose from, each containing great spiritual challenges and depth of insight. While exercising our minds on the likes of Florovsky, Vlachos, Romanides, Meyendorff, and

Schemmann - all of whom are spokesmen of the Church "par excellence" - let us not forget our Lord saying "unless you... become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3). In our efforts to grasp the unfathomable depths of the Church, therein crouches a temptation for "life in Christ" to appear complicated, difficult, near impossible to understand - the stuff reserved for learned "theologians". Thanks be to God in our day come more and more children's books in English that accurately present the greatest truths of Faith in clear, pure, and beautifully simple terms. Such a one is the book, *The Path to Confession*. "It was written for children but grown-ups may also find it interesting" (from the Preface).

The Path to Confession begins by placing one in Paradise, in the Garden. In Paradise everything is bright and lovely, there is warmth and light, all is of God, and all is filled with the Grace of God; peace and joy beyond comprehension! The soul in Paradise is a part of all that it sees and experiences of such a wonderful place. In Paradise we discover that God has not only planted such a wonderful garden around us, but also within us, in our hearts: Paradise “without”, Paradise “within”, such is the wonderful work of God! Because of sin life did not remain ever bright, warm, and light.... Just as Adam and Eve lost Paradise, so we ourselves are the cause of “inclement weather” in the Paradise of our hearts. Our sky darkens (hurt feelings harbored), large threatening clouds form (concealed hostility), the air grows stuffy and stale (unforgiveness), lightning and thunder crash aloud (heated words and quarrels). Everything heretofore experienced of God in the Paradise of the heart disappears as the heart plunges into darkness. This little book offers the God-ordained way back to Paradise. It guides on the path to self-knowledge, to awareness of sins, guides us in the struggle against the darkness of stormy passions, leads us through the grace of Holy Confession and Communion. It exhorts us toward good works set opposed to our sins that we may, by Grace, re-attain Paradise in our hearts and therein reap the abundant harvest intended by God from the beginning.

Along the Path... we are beautifully introduced to the saints. Each saint guides us from their own unique experience and gifts, offering practical spiritual counsel. Adam and Eve speak to us directly of how they were deceived by the serpent, how they watched in tears as their descendants became enslaved to the power of sin. Warning us against such subtle deception and enslavement, their sole confidence comes in the victory of Christ over the serpent. St. Peter speaks to us about the priests responsibility to remit sins through Christ, St. Paul tells us of our spiritual armor in Christ, St. John the Baptist and the Archangel Uriel guide us through the passions of disbelief and spiritual ignorance / laziness. Likewise do we hear from St. George, St. Seraphim, St. Nicholas, St. Alexis the Passion-Bearer, among others. Each saint speaks to us directly from the immeasurable depths of the Holy Scriptures, testifying to their unity of faith in Christ. As each temptation and snare is identified and illustrated, the refrain “Forgive us, Merciful Lord!” is given us to pray as we read.

A particular strength of *The Path to Confession* was evident as I “coincidentally” read *The Ancestral Sin*, by Fr. John Romanides. Fr. Romanides painstakingly points out in his book the oft-encountered Western captivity of theology with respect to sin, the Fall, and salvation: death is incorrectly assumed a punishment from God for sin, salvation a mere release from God’s wrath against sinful mankind. Our Lord’s salvific work on the Cross properly understood, frees us from sin and death, not from God’s supposed wrath. The Path... portrays this essential Orthodox truth simply and beautifully. Adam recalls, “The precious blood of the lamb of God flowed down the Cross and washed my remains that had lain for centuries under Golgotha. The Holy and Merciful One lifted the curse that I had brought upon mankind, the curse which men had fueled by their own lawlessness.” The “curse” was not from God upon sinful man, but the result of Adam’s deception by the serpent, for which he, Adam, felt responsible. The book brings out that God isn’t “angry” for our sins, but rather compassionately labors lest we fail to get up should we fall. Our life, under the curse of Adam’s sin, is not to be characterized by constant fear of God’s punitive judgment, but rather is humble repentance before

a Merciful God: "If they [Adam and Eve] had repented in the simplicity of their hearts without making excuses, without shifting the blame, the All- Merciful Lord would have forgiven them and cured their terrible wound. Let this also be a lesson for us." Sins and temptations are accurately presented as alien to our nature, parasites upon our souls, and enemies to be fought against in the struggle to regain in Christ the Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. 17:21). We are to remain steadfast and confident in warring against sin, never despairing should we fall.

The Path to Confession offers abundant practical teaching and guidance. In its pages the Theotokos Herself encourages us as we prepare for Confession to write our sins down beforehand, to confess the most serious ones first lest we get distracted, to never despair or overly sorrow but eagerly and ever run to our loving and patient God with our sins. We are led through what to expect in the "act" of Confessing: kissing the Cross and Gospel, what the priest wears and why, the prayers read, the manner in which we should speak - Some people, while telling their sins, speak directly to the priest: 'Batiushka, I have sinned many times through disobedience...' it seems to me that it would be better to address your words to Christ Himself: 'Lord, I have sinned before Thee...'" . We are instructed to listen attentively to the priest's counsel, then receive a blessing from him "because the hand of God has touched you through him."

Finally, we are walked through the steps of Holy Communion. In this respect the mystery of Holy Confession is not left isolated from the rest of our experience of the Church, but rather assumed in its natural context of our life in Christ. Pre- communion prayers, approaching the chalice properly, thanksgiving prayers, firm resolve not to sin again but rather to do "good works" unto the glory of God, and a healthy relationship with one's loving spiritual father are all assumed in the life of the one who is confessing - all are practically addressed at the conclusion of the book. Having guided us, encouraged us, instructed us unto salvation it concludes: "If you can do this, you will be in Paradise and Paradise will be in you.... ...The end, and Glory to our God!"

WHEN YOU'RE DOWN TO NOTHING, GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING by Emily Lorelli (from "Musings on a Marquee" blog)

Since I wrote my first post last year in April (Oh my goodness! Has time actually gone that quickly!), Lake Washington Christian Church has moved and the weekly marquee posts are no longer. However, I wrote a few of them down before they disappeared with the idea that I would write about them at a later date, and so here I am, almost a year later, doing just that.

Being an Orthodox Christian, I have just finished the first week of Great Lent, and though my labors can hardly be called rigorous, my small efforts remind me why the Church gives us this season of fasting, and it calls to mind one of the marquee posts: "When you're down to nothing, God's up to something."

It may be tempting at this point to think, *Oh great; here she goes with talk about Lent being a time to starve and punish and deprive oneself*, and there was a time when I thought about Lent this way too. When I was young, Lent for me was the time of year that my parents suddenly and arbitrarily, in my perception, declared that the TV was forbidden, that we couldn't have ice-cream, and we were going to church twice as often as normal for seven weeks. Sure I knew we were

preparing ourselves for Pascha; but I guess I never really understood how depriving me of my cartoons was going to make me "ready." What could be all that bad about the Smurfs?

As my sisters and I grew up, our Lenten endeavors, as prescribed and encouraged by my parents, expanded to include not eating meat and limiting our intake of sweets. And so for many years, I thought dietary restriction was the main labor of Lent; the payoff for this labor then was the Paschal break-fast when we could indulge (and often over-indulge) in all the foods that we'd deprived ourselves of during the Lenten season.

It has taken many years, several of which I didn't observe Lent at all, for me to emerge from this limited understanding (my own limitation, not my parents') and begin to understand that Lent is not about starvation and punishment and deprivation, but about making space for God in my life. In today's world, this is no small feat!

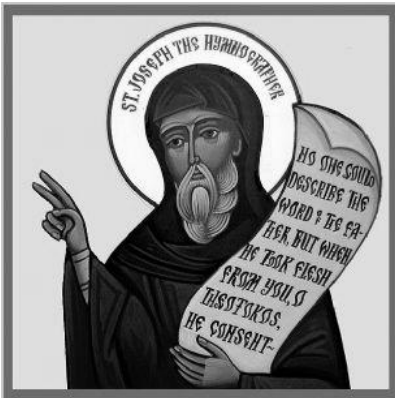
Making space for God is hard enough without the distractions of the world; my mind makes enough noise on its own. When I'm not actively engaged with a member of my family (and all too often even when I am), my mind is running through my to-do list and calendar to keep up with what's next. Most of these tasks are important to running our home: What am I teaching my children in homeschool today? Can I fold a load of laundry while the kids eat lunch? What is for lunch? What am I making for dinner? When do I need to start that? When does Jacob need to be at karate? Is Softball practice today? I derive a sense of accomplishment when my to-do lists are full and I don't have a spare moment; having so much to do and think about must mean that I'm very important. And when I get to the end of my day and the kids are in bed, rather than have a few quiet moments before bed, I turn on the TV and turn off my brain, allowing it to be entertained by "realities" that are not my own and are not from God. There is no room for God in my life; it is too full of me.

The pastor of LWCC most likely meant "down to nothing" in the popular sense of being at the end of one's rope, weakened by stress or sickness, with nowhere else to turn. And when I first read this particular marquee post, I thought about the times in my life when I was down to nothing and God was definitely up to something. But, however fruitful the lessons I learned in those moments were, they often came through circumstances that I could not control, or in ways that I would not want to duplicate. In those instances, I almost felt that God was beating down my door; I *had* to let him in.

Great Lent, on the other hand, I'm realizing, has been given to us by the Church as a gift, an opportunity for each one of us to *invite* God into our hearts by voluntarily getting "down to nothing" – to make at least a little space for Him amidst the clutter and detritus of our lives. The Church, in her wisdom, offers guidelines to help us with this effort. We are asked not to eat meat and dairy and to restrict the number of our meals. But Lent is not merely a strict diet. Fr. John Mack writes in *Journey to the Kingdom: Reflections on the Sunday Gospels* that while "It's not wrong for us to eat meat and dairy products. It's not wrong for us to eat and be full ... Christ has come to be everything for us. Christ has come so that we can be happy and joyful when we have everything and when we have nothing" (122).

As a family, we have tried to accept the gift of Great Lent by trying to create space in our lives so that Jesus can begin to become everything to us. We spend much less time in front of the TV, and in the evenings I make a point not to turn it on at all. While we don't strictly observe the "rules" of the fast, we simplify our meals so that they take less planning, less thought. While driving from place to place, we listen to church music or have quiet rather than listen to the radio. We eat our dinner together at the dining room table instead of in front of the TV. We make time to say prayers together as a family before bed. And I try as best I can to put prayer into my day.

Through these meager Lenten efforts, I'm far from being "down to nothing" and I still have to consider what I'm going to teach my children, what to prepare for meals, how to keep the house relatively clean, and where we each need to be and when. However, in the small amount of space I've made for Him, I can already feel that God is up to something. I am more mindful of Him as I consider all that I must do during my day, and I have the desire to do it more patiently and lovingly, though I don't always succeed. No matter how full my task list is and how busy my day, my sense of self-importance is tempered by the knowledge that I can do nothing good without Him. In fact, I am becoming more aware of when I fall short and need forgiveness. When I lie down to bed I can feel my heart move towards prayer, gratefully desiring to sing God's praises and ask for His mercy. And now that my life is not quite as full of me and there is a little more room for Him, He's beginning to make room in me for others – the sick, the hungry, the naked. Great Lent then, I've come to realize in my limited understanding, is not about deprivation, starvation, and punishment, but about willingly and lovingly cleaning and quieting my life – getting as close as possible to being down to nothing so that God can be up to something – ultimately, getting us ready for Pascha and the realization that though we've done nothing to deserve it, God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross, and conquer death so that we may be reunited with Him.



THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

April 4: Venerable Joseph the Hymnographer

Saint Joseph the Hymnographer, "the sweet-voiced nightingale of the Church," was born in Sicily in 816 into a pious Christian family. His parents, Plotinos and Agatha, moved to the Peloponnesos to save themselves from barbarian invasions. When he was fifteen, St Joseph went to Thessalonica and entered the monastery of Latomos. He was distinguished by his piety, his love for work, his meekness, and he gained the good will of all the

brethren of the monastery. He was later ordained as a priest.

St Gregory the Dekapolite (November 20) visited the monastery and took notice of the young monk, taking him along to Constantinople, where they settled together near the church of the holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus. This was during the reign of the emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820), a time of fierce iconoclast

persecution.

Sts Gregory and Joseph fearlessly defended the veneration of holy icons. They preached in the city squares and visited in the homes of the Orthodox, encouraging them against the heretics. The Church of Constantinople was in a most grievous position. Not only the emperor, but also the patriarch were iconoclast heretics.

At that time the Roman bishops were in communion with the Eastern Church, and Pope Leo III, who was not under the dominion of the Byzantine Emperor, was able to render great help to the Orthodox. The Orthodox monks chose St Joseph as a steadfast and eloquent messenger to the Pope. St Gregory blessed him to journey to Rome and to report on the plight of the Church of Constantinople, the atrocities of the iconoclasts, and the dangers threatening Orthodoxy.

During the journey, St Joseph was captured by Arab brigands who had been bribed by the iconoclasts. They took him to the island of Crete, where they handed him over to the iconoclasts, who locked him up in prison. Bravely enduring all the deprivations, he encouraged the other prisoners. By his prayers, a certain Orthodox bishop who had begun to waver was strengthened in spirit and courageously accepted martyrdom.

St Joseph spent six years in prison. On the night of the Nativity of Christ in 820 he was granted a vision of St Nicholas of Myra, who told him about the death of the iconoclast Leo the Armenian, and the end of the persecution.

St Nicholas gave him a paper scroll and said, "Take this scroll and eat it." On the scroll was written: "Hasten, O Gracious One, and come to our aid if possible and as You will, for You are the Merciful One." The monk read the scroll, ate it and said, "How sweet are Thine oracles to my throat" (Ps 118/119:103). St Nicholas bade him to sing these words. After this the fetters fell off the saint, the doors of the prison opened, and he emerged from it. He was transported through the air and set down on a large road near Constantinople, leading into the city.

When he reached Constantinople, St Joseph found that St Gregory the Dekapolite was no longer among the living, leaving behind his disciple John (April 18), who soon died. St Joseph built a church dedicated to St Nicholas and transferred the relics of Sts Gregory and John there. A monastery was founded near the church.

St Joseph received a portion of the relics of the Apostle Bartholomew from a certain virtuous man. He built a church in memory of the holy apostle. He loved and honored St Bartholomew, and he was distressed that there was no Canon glorifying the holy Apostle. He desired to adorn the Feast of St Bartholomew with hymns, but he did not dare to compose them himself.

For forty days St Joseph prayed with tears, preparing for the Feast of the holy apostle. On the eve of the Feast the Apostle Bartholomew appeared to him in the altar. He pressed the holy Gospel to Joseph's bosom, and blessed him to write church hymns with the words, "May the right hand of the Almighty God bless you, may your tongue pour forth waters of heavenly wisdom, may your heart be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and may your hymnody delight the entire world." After this miraculous appearance, St Joseph composed a Canon to the Apostle Bartholomew, and from that time he began to compose hymns and Canons in honor of the Mother of God, of the saints, and in honor of St Nicholas, who

liberated him from prison.

During the revival of the iconoclast heresy under the emperor Theophilus (829-842), St Joseph suffered a second time from the heretics. He was exiled to Cherson [Chersonessus] for eleven years. The Orthodox veneration of holy icons was restored under the holy empress Theodora (February 11) in 842, and St Joseph was made keeper of sacred vessels at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Because of his bold denunciation of the brother of the empress, Bardas, for unlawful cohabitation, the saint was again sent into exile and returned only after Bardas died in 867.

Patriarch Photius (February 6) restored him to his former position and appointed him Father-confessor for all the clergy of Constantinople.

Having reached old age, St Joseph fell ill. On Great and Holy Friday, the Lord informed him of his approaching demise in a dream. The saint made an inventory of the church articles in Hagia Sophia, which were under his official care, and he sent it to Patriarch Photius.

For several days he prayed intensely, preparing for death. He prayed for peace for the Church, and the mercy of God for his soul. Having received the Holy Mysteries of Christ, St Joseph blessed all who came to him, and with joy he fell asleep in the Lord (+ 863). The choirs of the angels and the saints, whom St Joseph had glorified in his hymnology, carried his soul to Heaven in triumph.

In 890, his biographer John the deacon of the Great Church wrote about the spirit and power of St Joseph's Canons: "When he began to write verses, then the hearing was taken with a wondrous pleasantness of sound, and the heart was struck by the power of the thought. Those who strive for a life of perfection find a respite here. Writers, having left off with their other versification, from this one treasure-trove, from the writings of St Joseph, began to scoop out his treasure for their own songs, or better to say, daily they scoop them out.

And finally, all the people carry it over into their own language, so as to enlighten with song the darkness of night, or staving off sleep, to continue with the vigil until sunrise. If anyone were peruse the life of a saint of the Church on any given day, they would see the worthiness of St Joseph's hymns and acknowledge his glorious life. Actually, since the lives and deeds of almost every saint are adorned with praises, is not he worthy of immortal glory, who has worthily and exquisitely known how to glorify them?

Now let some saints glorify his meekness, and others his wisdom, and others his works, and all together glorify the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who so abundantly and immeasurably has bestowed his gifts on him."

Most of the Canons in the MENAION are St Joseph's work. His name may be found in the Ninth Ode as an acrostic. He also composed many of the hymns in the PARAKLETIKE.



WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

CHRIST IS RISEN!

A Paschal Epistle Of Archbishop John [Maximovitch] To the Western European And East Asian Flock And To All His Spiritual Children, 1956, Paris.

Let us cleanse our senses and see through the gleaming, unapproachable light of Christ's Resurrection.

Now is everything filled-full with light -- the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. All is presently bathed in light: Christ is risen from the dead. The heavens make merry, the earth rejoiceth, the underworld exulteth.

The Angels in Heaven hymn Thy Resurrection, O Christ-Saviour. Do Thou make us, on earth, also worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart.

The Angelic Choir, horrified at seeing Its Creator and Master dead, doth now, in joyous song, glorify Him resurrected. Today doth Adam exult, and Eve rejoiceth; and with them do the Prophets and Patriarchs sing worthy songs to the Creator of all and to our Deliverer, Who did descend into the underworld for our sake.

The Giver of Life doth lead men out of hell this day, and up-lifteth them to Heaven; He layeth low the powers of the enemy and breaketh down the gates of hell by the Divine power of His authority.

On earth, the Angels announce the gladsome tidings to men and declare Christ's Resurrection. Attired in gleaming white robes, the Angels ask the Myrrh-bearing Women: "Why seek ye the Living One amongst the dead? He is risen; He is not here! Come, see the place where the Lord did lie."

The Myrrh-bearing Women rush to the Apostles, bearing to them the joyous news. And through the Apostles and the Gospel is Christ's Resurrection preached unto all the world today.

Not all the Apostles immediately saw the risen Christ through spiritual eyes. Two disciples travelling to Emmaus did see Jesus walking with them, but did not recognize Him till such time as He had warmed their saddened hearts; and then were their spiritual eyes opened. Mary Magdalene conversed with Christ in the garden, but neither recognized Him nor was cognizant of the mystery of the Resurrection, until the voice of her beloved Teacher touched her heart and illumined her soul, which had been given to thinking in worldly fashion.

It was the Beloved Disciple John, whose heart was pure and undimmed by, timidity, who before all others descried the light of the risen Christ through spiritual eyes; and with his bodily eyes did he behold the manifested Lord.

Scattering and dispersing the dark and gloomy tempest of sin, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone forth, gleaming not in the hearts and souls of the Apostles only, but in those of all who draw near to Him with faith, salvation seeking.

"Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed," Christ sayeth; "blessed are those who have perceived Me not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the heart."

It was with his spiritual eyes that Archdeacon Stephan, the Proto-martyr, saw the heavens opened and the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. It was with eyes of faith that the risen Lord was beheld by Great-martyr George the Trophy-bearer and by all the other martyrs who laid down their earthly lives for Christ, in order that they might receive from Him life eternal. It was upon Him that *podvizhniki* ["athletes"-of-the-spirit] did fix their spiritual gaze; despising earthly pleasures, they were crowned in the heavens with glory unfading.

But neither the scribes nor the pharisees, His enemies, saw the resurrected Christ. Nor did the tormentors of the martyrs see Him, strengthening the martyrs. Neither did, nor do, all those whose spiritual gaze is dimmed by unbelief, whose heart is befouled with sins and vices, whose will is directed only toward the earthly, ever see the light of the glory of the risen Christ.

Let us cleanse our hearts from all filth and foulness, and our spiritual eyes will be enlightened.

The light of Christ's Resurrection will flood and fill our souls, in like manner as the Church of the Resurrection, yearly, throughout the centuries, on Great Saturday, is illumined with light when the Orthodox - and only the Orthodox Patriarch receives the Heavenly Fire.

Let us lift up our hearts! Let us forsake everything worldly; let us rejoice in this day and be exceeding glad!

Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death by death.

Christ is risen!



THE ORTHODOX FAITH

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

The Symbol of Faith: Faith

I believe ...

Faith is the foundation of Christian life. It is the fundamental virtue of Abraham, the forefather of Israel and the Christian Church. "Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (*Gen 15:6*).

Jesus begins his ministry with the same command for faith.

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15).

All through his life Jesus was calling for faith; faith in himself, faith in God his Father, faith in the Gospel, faith in the Kingdom of God. The fundamental condition of the Christian life is faith, for with faith come hope and love and every good work and every good gift and power of the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine of Christ, the apostles, and the Church.

In the Scriptures faith is classically defined as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (*Heb 11:1*).

There are basically two aspects to faith; one might even say two meanings of faith. The first is faith "in" someone or something, faith as the recognition of these persons or things as real, true, genuine, and valuable; for example, faith in God, in Christ, in the Holy Trinity, in the Church. The second is faith in the sense of trust or reliance. In this sense, for example, one would not merely believe in God, in his existence, goodness, and truth; but one would believe God, trust his word, rely upon his presence, depend securely and with conviction upon his promises. For Christians both types of faith are necessary. One must believe in certain things with mind, heart, and soul; and then live by them in the course of everyday life.

Faith is sometimes opposed to **reason**, and belief to **knowledge**. According to Orthodoxy, faith and reason, belief and knowledge, are indeed two different things. They are two different things, however, which always belong together and which may never be opposed to each other or separated from each other.

In the first place one cannot believe anything which he does not already somehow know. A person cannot possibly believe in something he knows nothing about. Secondly, what one believes in and trusts must be reasonable. If asked to believe in the divinity of a cow, or to place one's trust in a wooden idol, one would refuse on the basis that it is not reasonable to do so. Thus, faith must have its reasons, it must be built upon knowledge, it must never be blind. Thirdly, knowledge itself is often built upon faith. One cannot come to knowledge through absolute skepticism. If anything is known at all, it is because there exists a certain faith in man's knowing possibilities and a real trust that the objects of knowledge are really "showing themselves" and that the mind and the senses are not acting deceitfully. Also, in relation to almost all written words, particularly those which relate to history, the reader is called to an act of faith. He must believe that the author is telling the truth; and, therefore, he must have certain knowledge and certain reasons for giving his trust.

Very often it is only when one does give his trust and does believe something that one is able to "go further," so to speak, and to come finally to knowledge of his own and to the understanding of things he would never have understood before. It is true to say that certain things always remain obscure and meaningless unless they are viewed in the light of faith which then provides a way of explaining and understanding their existence and meaning. Thus, for example, the phenomena of suffering and death would be understood differently by one who believes in Christ than by one who believes in some other religion or philosophy or in none at all.

Faith is always personal. Each person must believe for himself. No one can believe for another. Many people may believe and trust the same things because of a unity of their knowledge, reason, experience and convictions. There can be a community of faith and a unity of faith. But this community and unity necessarily begins and rests upon the confession of personal faith.

For this reason the Symbol of Faith in the Orthodox Church -- not only at baptisms and official rituals of joining the Church, but also in common prayers and in the Divine Liturgy -- always remains in the first person. If we can pray, offer, sing, praise, ask, bless, rejoice, and commend ourselves and each other to God in the Church and as the Church, it is only because each one of us can say honestly, sincerely, and with prayerful conviction: "Lord, I believe..." -- adding, as one must, the words of the man in the gospel -- "... help thou my unbelief" (Mk 9:24).

In order for our faith to be genuine, we must express it in everyday life. We must act according to our faith and prove it by the goodness and power of God acting in our lives. This does not mean that we "tempt God" or "put God to the test" by doing foolish and unnecessary things just for the sake of seeing if God will participate in our foolishness. But it does mean that if we live by faith in our pursuit of righteousness, we can demonstrate the fact that God will be with us, helping and guiding us in every way.

For faith to grow and become stronger, it must be used. Each person should live according to the measure of faith which he has, however small, weak and

imperfect it might be. By acting according to one's faith, trust in God and the certitude of God's presence is given, and with the help of God many things which were never before imagined become possible.

HYMNOGRAPHY: APRIL

April 5: 5th Sunday of Great Lent – St. Mary of Egypt

Troparion - Tone 8

The image of God was truly preserved in you, mother,
for you took up the Cross and followed Christ.
By so doing, you taught us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away,
but to care instead for the soul, since it is immortal.
Therefore your spirit, holy mother Mary, Rejoices with the angels!

Kontakion - Tone 3

Having been a sinful woman,
you became through repentance a Bride of Christ.
Having attained angelic life,
you defeated demons with the weapon of the Cross.
Therefore, most glorious Mary, you are a Bride of the Kingdom!

April 11: Lazarus Saturday

Troparion - Tone 1

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your passion,
You did confirm the universal Resurrection, O Christ God!
Like the children with the palms of victory,
We cry out to You, O Vanquisher of death;
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!

Kontakion - Tone 2

Christ the Joy, the Truth and the Light of all,
The Life of the World and the Resurrection
Has appeared in His goodness, to those on earth.
He has become the Image of our Resurrection,
Granting divine forgiveness to all!

April 12: Palm Sunday

Troparion - Tone 1

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your passion,
You did confirm the universal Resurrection, O Christ God!
Like the children with the palms of victory,
We cry out to You, O Vanquisher of death;
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!

Troparion - Tone 4

When we were buried with You in Baptism, O Christ God,
We were made worthy of eternal life by Your Resurrection!
Now we praise You and sing:
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!

Kontakion - Tone 6

Sitting on Your throne in heaven,
Carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God!
Accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing:
Blessed is He that comes to recall Adam!

April 13: Great and Holy Monday

Troparion - Tone 8

Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight,
And blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching,
And again unworthy is the servant whom He shall find heedless.
Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep,
Lest you be given up to death and lest you be shut out of the Kingdom.
But rouse yourself crying: Holy, Holy, Holy, are You, O our God!
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us!

Kontakion - Tone 8

Jacob lamented the loss of Joseph,
But his noble son was seated on a chariot
And honored as a king.
For when he refused to be enslaved
By the pleasures of the Egyptian woman,
He was glorified by the Lord who beholds the hearts of men,
And bestows upon them an incorruptible crown.

April 14: Great and Holy Tuesday

Troparion - Tone 8

Behold the Bridegroom comes at midnight ...

Kontakion - Tone 2

You know that this is the last hour, O wretched soul,
And fear the cutting of the fig tree.
Work diligently therefore at the talent given to you
Keep watch and pray:
Let us not remain outside the bridal chamber of Christ.

April 15: Great and Holy Wednesday

Troparion - Tone 8

When the glorious disciples were enlightened
At the washing of their feet before the supper,
Then the impious Judas was darkened, ailing with avarice
And to the lawless judges he betrays You, the righteous Judge.
Behold, O lover of money, this man who because of money hanged himself.
Flee from the greedy soul which dared such things against the Master.
O Lord, who is good towards all men, glory to You!

Kontakion - Tone 2

With his hands the betrayer receives the Bread.
With his hands he secretly receives the silver,
The price of Him who fashioned man with His hands;
So the servant and deceiver Judas remains depraved.

April 16: Great and Holy Thursday

Troparion - Tone 6

Of Your Mystical Supper, O Son of God,
Accept me today as a communicant.
For I will not speak of Your mysteries to Your enemies,
Neither like Judas will I give You a kiss,
But like the thief will I confess You.
Remember me, O Lord, in Your Kingdom!

Troparion - Tone 4

By Your precious blood,
You have redeemed us from the curse of the law.
By being nailed to the cross and pierced by a spear,
You have poured forth immortality for man.
O our Savior, glory to You!

Kontakion - Tone 8

Come, let us all sing the praises of Him who was crucified for us,
 For Mary said when she beheld Him upon the tree:
 Though You do endure the cross, You are my Son and my God!

April 17: Great and Holy Friday

Troparion - Tone 2

The Noble Joseph,
 When he had taken down Your most pure Body from the tree,
 Wrapped it in fine linen,
 And anointed it with spices,
 And placed it in a new tomb.

Troparion - Tone 2

The angel came to the myrrh-bearing women at the tomb and said:
 Myrrh is fitting for the dead,
 But Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption.

Kontakion - Tone 8

Come, let us all sing the praises of Him who was crucified for us,
 For Mary said when she beheld Him upon the tree:
 Though You do endure the cross, You are my Son and my God!

April 18: Great and Holy Saturday

Troparion - Tone 2

When You did descend to death, O Life Immortal,
 You did slay hell with the splendor of Your Godhead,
 And when from the depths You did raise the dead,
 All the Powers of Heaven cried out,
 O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to You!

Kontakion - Tone 6

He who shut in the depths is beheld dead,
 Wrapped in fine linen and spices.
 The Immortal One is laid in a tomb as a mortal man.
 The women have come to anoint Him with myrrh,
 Weeping bitterly and crying:
 "This is the most blessed Sabbath
 On which Christ has fallen asleep to rise on the third day!"

April 19: Pascha – The Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ

Troparion - Tone 2

Christ is Risen from the dead trampling down death by death,
 And upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Kontakion - Tone 8

Thou didst descend into the tomb, O Immortal.
 Thou didst destroy the power of death.
 In victory didst Thou arise, O Christ God,
 Proclaiming rejoice to the myrrh-bearing women,
 Granting peace to Thine apostles, and bestowing resurrection on the fallen.

April 26: Antipascha – St. Thomas Sunday

Troparion - Tone 7

From the sealed tomb, You did shine forth O Life!
 Through closed doors You did come to Your disciples, O Christ God!
 Renew in us, through them, an upright spirit,
 By the greatness of Your mercy, O Resurrection of all!

Kontakion - Tone 8

Thomas touched Your life-giving side with an eager hand, O Christ God,
 When You did come to Your apostles through closed doors.
 He cried out with all: You are my Lord and my God!

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – APRIL

April 1: Diana Bibireata, Mary Lekanof, Shari Mount (St. Mary of Egypt)

April 9: Brian Hayman (Monkmartyr Vadim of Persia)

April 25: Mark Marttila (Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark)

April 29: Sasha Kvasnikoff (St. Basil the Wonderworker or Ostrog)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Note: If you wish to have someone included on our parish prayer list for remembrance during the divine services, please notify Fr. John before the end of the month. This list will in most cases be cleared at the beginning of each month.

Please include the following people, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, in whatever prayers you can offer. Each of them is in special need this month for our common intercessions before God.

Living

Robert

Mark

Sarah

Patricia

Flore

Allan Simeon

Yelena and the child to be born of her

Sarah Maria and the child to be born of her

Julia Agnes

Elie

Cat. Deborah

Dereon Anthony

Patricia

Motoy

Bistra

Sonya

Ada

Departed

Catechetical Challenge Answers: 1. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (cf. I Corinthians 1:18-2:2) 2. The reading of the Gospel about the Resurrection of Christ, proclaimed from the tomb in the center of the temple. 3. It is the same: Matthew 28.