



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

11 Wilkins Station Road - Box 805 - Medford, NJ 08055

Rectory Phone: 856-665-2491 - Fr. John's Cell Phone: 609-315-2894 - Email: frjs@aol.com

www.holycrossmedford.org

March, 2009

Our Brother is our Life

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

The purpose of all prayer and fasting, of all liturgy and sacraments, of all spiritual exercises and ascetic practices, is to come to know and love God in all people and things, especially our enemies and the “least of the brethren.” This is the purpose of the lenten spring and of life itself. It is the highest and greatest mystery, the deepest and most profound truth: God is seen, known and loved in everyone and everything. For the only-begotten Son of God has come to earth in creaturely form in order to unite all things in Himself, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:10). He has come to identify Himself with everyone and everything, especially the sinful, the wayward and the lost. He, being our God and Creator, has become our brother and our slave. And so in Him we encounter everyone and everything. And in everyone and everything we encounter Him.

The elder Silouan, a monk of Mount Athos who died in 1938 and was glorified as a saint of the Church in 1988, came to know this deepest mystery and most profound truth through his own spiritual experience. He bore witness to it in his writings, which are perfect reading for the lenten season.

These forty years, ever since the Lord through the Holy Spirit gave me to know the love of God, have I grieved over God's people.

O brethren, there is nothing better than the love of God when the Lord fires the soul with love for God our fellow-man.

The man who knows the delight of the love of God – when the soul, warmed by grace, loves both God and her brother – knows in part that “the kingdom of God is within us.” Blessed is the soul that loves her brother, for *our brother is our life*.

If we wish to love God we must observe all that the Lord commanded in the Gospels. Our hearts must brim with compassion and not only feel for fellowmen but pity for every creature – for every thing created by God.

The man who has the Holy Spirit within him, in however slight a degree, sorrows day and night for all mankind. His heart is filled with pity for all of God's creatures, and more especially for those who do not know God or who resist Him...For them, more than for himself, he prays night and day, that all may repent and know the Lord.

I beseech you, put this to the test. When a man affronts you or brings dishonor on your head, or takes what is yours, or persecutes the Church, pray to the Lord and say: "O Lord, we are all Your creatures. Have pity on Your servants and turn their hearts to repentance," and you will be aware of grace in your soul. To begin with, constrain your heart to love her enemies, and the Lord, seeing your good will, will help you in all things, and experience itself will show you the way. But the person who thinks with malice on his enemies has not God's love within him and does not know God.

St. Anthony the Great sums up this entire teaching in a few short sentences. "Our life and our death is with our neighbor," he writes. "If we gain our brother, we have gained God. But if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ." And, as we have seen, St. Silouan says it all in five brief words: "Our brother is our life."

[This was taken from Fr. Hopko's book, *The Lenten Spring*. Copies of it and of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's book, *Great Lent*, are available in the office for \$10.00. Fr. Hopko also many wonderful reflections on Great Lent and other subjects available as free podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio (<http://ancientfaith.com>)]

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON** – *Saturday March 7 at 9:00.*
- **ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING** – *Sunday March 8, at 9:15.*
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** – *Wednesday March 25 at 7 PM.*
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING** – *Sunday March 15, following the liturgy*
- **CAREGIVERS' MEETING** –

OUR 2009 LENTEN READER: *Selections from Great Lent by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann* are available for free in the vestibule.

CONFESSIONS will be heard every evening following the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, from 6:15 on Friday evenings before the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, after Great Vespers on Saturday evenings, and before the Divine Liturgy from 9:30. Other times can be arranged by calling Fr. John.

ST. HELENA'S GUILD: The upcoming Spring Bazaar date is Sat. April 4th. Pre-orders are necessary for the babkas and rolls. Suggestions for other foods or items to sell are welcome. Perhaps a white elephant table of nice items could be set up.

COFFEE HOUR - If you cannot do the Sunday coffee hour date assigned to you, please contact someone to switch dates and then call Marie Clifton (856-482-1059). Also, since our numbers are small, not all of the Sunday coffee hour dates are filled and a few people are doing two coffee hours. We ask that you consider hosting one coffee hour a year. It's really painless and not a bakeoff contest. Please see the 2009 Sunday coffee hour sheet for your date and the minimal responsibilities for setup and cleanup.

Remember also that some parishioners are allergic to nuts and we ask that you label any items that contain nuts/peanut butter etc.

Your donation to the 'jar' on Sunday mornings helps to defray the costs of coffee cups, paper plates, juice cups and napkins. Coffee hour hosts do not need to bring in these items.

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES SUMMARY held on Wednesday February 25, 2009

Treasurer's Report

- **Finances** – Holy Cross is up to date with its bills and donations have been sufficient. Currently there is \$11, 296.00 in the checking account.
- **Spaghetti Dinner** – The spaghetti dinner earned \$803.00.
- **Covenant Hose Benefit Concert** – The benefit concert that took place at Holy Cross on February 22nd earned \$1,858.00 to date, although not all donations have arrived. This amount is expected to grow as more donations arrive and matching donations are added.
- **Contribution for Metropolitan Jonah** – The Diocese returned our \$100.00 contribution for the Metropolitan's gift saying that it was no longer needed.
- **2009 Budget** – The 2009 budget is based on historical income and expenses plus a 5% increase to account for inflation. It's hoped this methodology will produce a more accurate budget.

Pastor's Report

- Metropolitan Jonah said he would visit Holy Cross during Great Lent; however the Metropolitan has not indicated when the visit will take place.
- Recently Metropolitan Jonah presented his vision for the OCA. The Metropolitan would like development and leadership of the OCA to take place on the Diocesan and parish levels, reducing the structure and importance of a national administration.
- Father John was pleased with the success of the Covenant House benefit concert. About 80% of those who attended were from outside the Orthodox Church which gave our church good exposure within our community. The benefit concert was also successful in raising money for Covenant House.

Old Business

- **Library** – Bob Flanagan has organized the new library. However a check out system is needed. Bob is out with a severe leg injury, and will not be able to complete the Library until he returns.
- **Maintenance Bond** – Gary Mosser asked Medford to waive the requirement for a maintenance bond, Medford is likely to accept our request. However, an \$80.00 fee must be paid first.

New Business

- **Internet for Church Office/Phone Carrier** – Greg Sapnar is exploring possible internet providers for Holy Cross; however a final decision regarding which provider to use was not made. Greg would like to investigate this further.

RESPONSIBILITIES for March 2009

COFFEE HOUR:

March 1: Diane Zanghi
8: Kim Rommen
15: Joe & Helen Gulka
22: Genie Skuby
29: Marie Clifton

READERS

March 1: Josef Gulka
8: Don Dercole
15: Diana Pasca
22: Julia Mosser
29: Mark Skuby

ALTAR SERVERS

March 1: Andrew Abdallah & Paul Clifton
8: Eli Nugent & Paul Abdallah
15: David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler
22: Leo Weismantel & Stephen Shimchick
29: Paul Giovanni & Anatoly Lane

COMMUNION USHERS

March 1: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta
March 8: Kristina Zanghi & Faye Nugent
15: Julia & Lauren Mosser
22: Sierra & Miranda McCleery
29: Natalia Rommen & Anne Marie Brook
April 5: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta