



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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What is Worth Knowing About the Orthodox Faith?

by Fr. John

During the month of January I led the Adult Class in a discussion of some things that seemed, at least to me, worth knowing about our Faith. Originally, I wanted to present 10 points – but once we got going, I realized that the implications behind the first three affirmations and related questions required more consideration – at least as I looked at my own life. Here are the three points:

- 1) We come to church not just to know about God (facts & information), but to have the experience of knowing God. How do we begin?
- 2) Our prayer life matters. (As St. Theophan the Recluse pointed out: “If you are not successful in your prayer, do not expect success in anything. Prayer is the root of all.”) How do we pray during difficult times, like now?
- 3) Prayer is “conversation” with God. In what way?

We reviewed Fr Thomas Hopko’s “*15 Notes on Prayer*” and shared the occasions and circumstances that encouraged us to feel that we had in some way recognized God’s presence in our lives. We spoke about the need to identify words and images from the Scriptures and our liturgical hymns words that each of might find compelling and worth remembering. We discussed particular imagery that seemed appropriate in praying, especially as we considered the catastrophe in Haiti – and jointly contributed expressions that were woven together for our community’s prayer during the Divine Liturgy. In our last class, we reviewed how one might prepare and respond in thanksgiving for the celebration of the Liturgy, utilizing the materials assembled by the Community of the Holy Myrrhbearers. All of these resources will continue to be available in the vestibule or from me.

I am grateful and encouraged by the responses and enthusiasm of those who participated in the classes, particularly those who have expressed interest in continuing to meet and discuss areas and questions of spiritual importance. As we move into Great Lent, however, it becomes more difficult for me to lead these discussions at least before the Liturgy. But I want to take advantage of the momentum that has been established, so during the Sundays of Lent I will be

preparing a series of sermons that will be simpler and more interactive than usual – more like the sermons I direct to our children. During this time, we will discuss, from the context of the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?

Each week in advance I will identify the scriptural verse or phrase and questions that will initiate the presentation and our discussion. Though we will be limited by time, I hope it will also stimulate greater reflection. Additional points will be developed during the sermons at the end of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

I believe that more vibrant and meaningful interaction, beginning in a kind of study, but leading to pray and worship, will bear important fruits in our personal and corporate lives.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7 at 9:15**
- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 13 at 9AM**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – SUNDAY FEBRUARY 14, after the liturgy**
- **DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY CROSSROADS – SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21.**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY FEBRUARY 22 at 7 PM.**

ICE SKATING will take place on **FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5** at 7 PM, at the **IGLOO ICE SKATING RINK**, 3033 Fostertown Road, Mt Laurel, NJ 08054-6318. Cost is \$10.00 (\$8.00 to skate, \$2.00 for skate rental). Guests are welcome.

ANNUAL MEMORIAL LITURGY will be on **SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6** at 9 AM. If you've given Fr John the names of your departed he has them on record. Please email and give him any additional names to him.

FOLLOWING THE LITURGY ON SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6: "COOKING DURING LENT – A CHANGE OF PACE" led by Diana Pasca, Natalka Weismantel, & Maureen Sapnar. Soup will be read for those who attend and then a cooking demonstration will take place that will provide the attendees with some recipes that could easily be prepared at home. The recipes will be printed and available for everyone, along with some others that will be worth trying.

PRE-LENTEN LUNCHEON will be on SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7: We hope that Fr. Christopher Maciolek (ordained to the Holy Priesthood on Saturday January 30), his wife Gretchen, and children, will be with us on that day.

GREAT LENT WILL BEGIN with FORGIVENESS VESPERS, following the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday February 14**. Everyone, including our college students, is encouraged to prepare and come to Holy Confession during Great Lent, in anticipation for the celebration of Holy Pascha.

Fr. John will hear Confessions following the services during the first week of Great Lent, before the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, after Great Vespers on Saturday (and before - from 4-5 starting on Saturday March 6) , and on Sunday mornings before the liturgy.

Please don't wait until the last minute – especially until the last services of Great Lent. Confessions during Holy Week are discouraged.

OUR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will take place on Sunday February 21, following the Divine Liturgy. Financial reports and other documents will be available before the Meeting, please look at them in advance. All Committee representatives are asked to prepare and distribute their reports before the Meeting.

ST. HELENA'S GUILD – the next meeting will take place **Sunday, February 7th at 9:15am**. A pierogie session will take place **Friday, February 12th at 9am and Saturday the 13th** at 9am. Everyone is welcome to join the peeling and pinching 'fun' for as much time as you are able.

A REMINDER FOR EVERYONE (not just guild members) YOUR DONATION TO THE SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE HOUR 'JAR' HELPS OFFSET THE COST OF CUPS, SPOONS, KNIVES, FORKS, NAPKINS, COFFEE ETC. PLEASE DON'T JUST WALK BY FOR YOUR SNACK WITHOUT A DONATION.

If you are not currently hosting a coffee hour, please make a commitment to do just one coffee hour a year. Call Diane Vozdovic (609-288-6833) or Carol Ann Curry (856-985-4649) to add your name to the list. Also please consider joining St. Helena's Guild. Your help and input will undoubtedly be appreciated!

FROM THE INREACH COMMITTEE MEETING:

November thru December 2009: collection of food items for *Emergency Services* resulted in 25 cartons of food delivered to their site in Delanco. \$358 was collected as well and will be sent.. That is a great effort from our little parish.

The Committee recommended to the Parish Council that our parish's local charity efforts be organized with monthly collections be taken for the following concerns:

February: *Christina Semon/OCMC*

March & April: *Providence House Shelter for Domestic Violence*

May & June: *Atlantic City Rescue Mission (Housing Provider)*

July & August: Specific items to be collected for both *Covenant House & Emergency Services*

Sept. & Oct: *Interfaith Caregivers of Burlington County*

Nov & Dec: Emergency Services & Covenant House

FROM CHRISTINA SEMON:

Dear Father John,

Greetings in the Lord!

I just wanted to say hello from the Romanian mission field. How are you? Through the grace of God, I am well and things are moving along here. I am learning a lot from the experiences I have had here. Many of the lessons learned are about life in general. Please give my regards to the parish.

I am grateful that we are teammates in this missionary service. There are many struggles and challenges within the missionary service but we together offer prayers that are united and sent to God to help us all. I appreciate you sticking with me through 2009 and God willing I hope to continue our partnership through 2010.

One small update I would like to share is that we received 46 boxes of baby clothes and baby items that were from parishes and individuals in the USA. Glory to God! The participation of the parish family of Holy Cross in the clothing was greatly appreciated! Many of the mothers at the PTFC spend what money they earn on rent and utilities and that leaves them with nickles and dimes to spend on food and clothing for their children.

With gratitude and love in Christ,

Christina Semon

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OCMC Missionary to Romania

Glory to God for all things!

Visit the Christina's website at: csemon.ocmc.org

DEANERY LENTEN SERVICES: (4 PM)

February 21st- Sunday of Orthodoxy: Christ the Saviour Church-Paramus

February 28th- St. Gregory Palamas: Holy Trinity Church-Rayway

March 7th- Veneration of the Precious Cross: Annunciation Church-Brick

March 14th- St. John Climacus: Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church-Clifton

March 21st- St. Mary of Egypt: SS Peter & Paul Church-Manville

April 7th-Bright Wednesday: Christ the Saviour Church-Paramus (7 PM)

"LAMENTATIONS: ORTHODOX CHANTS OF HOLY WEEK" is the newest release from Archangel Voices (Vlad Morosan, director), a professional vocal ensemble committed to presenting Orthodox music in English. This CD features the best-loved hymns of Holy Week, including the Bridegroom texts, the Lamentations, Noble Joseph, and the Great Friday canon, and draws from Byzantine, (Greek, Antiochian, and Romanian traditions), Serbian, Russian, and Bulgarian repertoires. It is a wonderful way to spend time with these meditative texts.

The CD features nearly 80 minutes of music, and is available for \$18.95. They are available from Natalka Weismantel, the group's Music Producer, during coffee hour.

DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH: Please note that donations, particularly of liturgical items (icons, etc) for use in our church, should be reviewed in advance with Fr. John before being brought to the church for placement.

OUR COLLEGE STUDENTS: **Alexander** (Abdallah),/ **Anastasia** (Shimchick), **Andrew** (Abdallah), **Antonio** (Chong), **Bryan** (Thompson), **Christine** (Lane), **Christopher** (Abdallah), **Christopher** (Shimchick), **Danielle** (Giovanni), **Matthew** (Brook), **Ethan** (Detwiler), **Gianluca** (Keeler), **Jacquelyn** (Chong), **John** (Pierman), **Joshua** (Dowiak), **Julia** (Skuby), **Katherine** (Lane), **Kristin** (Little), **Martha** (Skuby), **Michael** (Shimchick), **Nikolas** (Tranchik), **Peter** (Abdallah), **Rachel** (Tranchik), **Stefan** (Keeler – recent graduate of Penn State) / **Vincent** (Abdallah)

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On Intercessory Prayer: A Question to Archbishop Rowan Williams

How do you feel about intercessory prayer? Yours is very much internal prayer, isn't it?

The Archbishop:

There's no huge difference really. A great Church of England writer of the twentieth century writing to a friend said, 'I'm going to spend ten minutes just thinking about you and Jesus', and I think that's a brilliant definition of intercessory prayer. You don't send in your list of requests or bombard God with your demands. You just hold the image and sense of a person or situation in the presence of God as if you want to let the one seep into the other. The bringing together of those two realities in your mind and heart is very much how I find intercession works.

Schedule of Parish Events for 2010 (as of December 14, 2009)

This schedule will be updated monthly.

- TBA: To be announced

February

- Meeting of Our Lord at the Temple – (Vespertal Liturgy – 2/1)
- Memorial Liturgy – 6th
- St. Helena’s Guild Meeting – 7th
- Pre-Lenten Lunch – 7th
- Community Luncheon – 13th.
- Great Lent Begins – 14/15th
- Annual Parish Meeting – 21st
- Pre-Sanctified Liturgies – 26th

- Beginning of 9 AM Divine Liturgy – TBA
- Parish Picnic – TBA

July

- Church Cleanup – TBA.

August

- Transfiguration – 6th
- Dormition – 15th
- Summer Church School – TBA.

March

- Community Luncheon – 6th.
- St. Helena’s Guild Meeting – 7th
- Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgy – 10th
- Pierogie Session – 13th
- Spring Bazaar – 20th.
- Annunciation – 25th
- Palm Sunday – 28th

September

- Nativity of the Theotokos – 8th
- Golf Fundraiser – TBA.
- Elevation of the Cross – 14th
- Fall Festival – TBA.

October

- Beginning of 10 AM Divine Liturgy – TBA.
- First day of Sunday Church School for children and young adults - TBA.
- First day of Adult Education – TBA.

November

- Holiday Mini-Festival – TBA.
- Presentation of the Theotokos – 21st
- Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service – TBA.

December

- St. Nicholas Vespers – TBA
- Parish Nativity Pageant – TBA.
- Nativity of Our Lord – 25th

April

- Good Friday Retreat – 2nd.
- Pascha – 4th
- Community Luncheon – TBA.
- Covenant House Benefit Concert – TBA

May

- Community Luncheon – TBA.
- Ascension Thursday – 13th
- Pentecost Sunday – 23rd
- SS. Peter & Paul fast begins – 31st

June

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RESPONSIBILITIES for February, 2010

COFFEE HOUR:

February 7: Pre-Lenten Luncheon
14: Ann Plescia
21: Val Olesnovich
28: Diane Zanghi

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READERS

(Epistle Readers are expected also to read the "3rd Hour" which precedes the liturgy, starting around 9:50, after the adult class)

February 7: Gene Dubiago
14: Diana Pasca
21: Mark Skuby
28: Julia Mosser

ALTAR SERVERS

February 7: Stephen Shimchick & Leon Weismantel
14: David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler
21: Anatoly Lane & Eli Nugent
28: Andrew Abdallah & Paul Giovanni

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COMMUNION USHERS

February 7: Kristina Zanghi & Faye Nugent
14: Natalia Rommen & Elisabeth Graham
21: Sierra & Miranda McCleery
28: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta

