

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

A Newsletter for the Russian Orthodox Community of Saint Panteleimon, Gosford

~ Number 12, 13 April 2003 ~

VISIT OF ARCHBISHOP HILARION

It is with great joy that we today receive Vladika Hilarion to serve with us in Gosford. Vladika has been a steadfast supporter of our community and has followed with interest our growth and our efforts to find a permanent home for our parish. A warm welcome is also extended to all visitors to our parish on what is for us a most special occasion.

ANNIVERSARY OF FATHER JOHN'S ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

Many of you will recall that Vladika also served with us during Great Lent in 2002, and that on April 14th, the 4th Sunday of Great Lent, he ordained Father John to the diaconate. Tomorrow, therefore, will be the first anniversary of Father John's divine service. We congratulate him on his anniversary and wish him many more years of faithful service to the Holy Orthodox Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

RAFFLE - ЛОТЕРЕЯ

The ladies' committee is at present selling tickets for a fund-raising raffle that is to be drawn in May 2003. Tickets are \$1.00 each and can be purchased from any of the ladies on the committee. Please support our community by purchasing a few tickets!

ABOUT GREAT LENT

Selections from a longer article by US Orthodox writer, Frederica Mathewes-Green
www.frederica.com

Whilst Catholics observe Lent with sacrifices that are frequently kept private, Eastern Orthodox Christians keep a Lenten observance that is both more communal and more demanding. From March 9 to Pascha (Easter) on April 27, Orthodox will eat no meat, fish (excepting shellfish), eggs, cheese, or other dairy products. Except on weekends they will not drink alcohol or use olive oil, which some interpret this to mean all oils.

What's left? Grains, vegetables, and fruits: oatmeal for breakfast, peanut butter sandwiches for lunch, spaghetti marinara for dinner. You get to know the mysteries of soy... You use Japanese, Chinese, and Indian cookbooks...

There's a subtle difference between Catholic and Orthodox spirituality regarding fasting. For Catholics, all penance has three elements: sorrow for sins, amendment of

life, and reparation to Divine justice. While Orthodox would affirm the first two, they'd find the third baffling. It wasn't until after the East-West split (11th century) that the idea took hold that our sins create a debt to God, which Jesus paid with his blood, and to which we can contribute sacrifices.

For Orthodox Christians, it's different. We believe that the "wages of sin" make us captives of Death, and Jesus rescued us by his blood. We would say that it was a sacrifice to the Father, as a brave soldier might offer a risky mission to his beloved general. But the soldier isn't *paying* the general; Orthodox don't think Jesus *paid* the Father, because the Father wasn't holding us captive. The Evil One was holding us captive, and was overcome when Jesus invaded his realm and rescued us, at the cost of his own blood.

That might sound like an obscure theological distinction, but it results in a whole different attitude toward fasting. For Orthodox, it's about sorrow for sin and strength for amendment of life--but not sacrifice, expiation, or reparation. It's forward-looking, rather than aimed at squaring past misdeeds. It's about increasing health, rather than diminishing debt.

So for Orthodox Christians, this fast is akin to training for a triathlon. It's a workout. St. Paul, of course, frequently used such metaphors, saying we should "strive like athletes for the prize." The Greek word for athletic training is "ascesis."

A football team in training may watch videos of past games and observe where they made mistakes. Likewise, we examine our lives and notice patterns of recurrent sin. Sin alienates us from the God who loves us; it sickens us and diminishes our ability to bear his radiant presence. We are sorry for our sins, sorry that we have behaved ungratefully toward the one who has given us everything, even rescued us by His blood.

So we repent. We pray to be given deeper repentance, and confess our sins to Christ in the presence of the priest. The priest pronounces sacramental forgiveness, and can also give guidance about growing stronger to resist sin in the future. He is like a trainer giving an athlete exercises geared to his personal strengths and weaknesses. Fasting is one of the classic exercises, but they also include reading Scripture and other Christian works, attendance at services throughout the week, and constant interior prayer with mental vigilance to evaluate thoughts before embracing them.

Fasting is one of the most-used "exercise machines" at the gym. It works out the willpower muscle, so that we have more self-control not only over impulsive eating, but also over other sinful impulses, like anger or envy. Disciplines of the mind strengthen the body, and disciplines of the body strengthen the mind.

Though this is the standard Orthodox Lenten fast, if you ask your friends you'll likely find variation. An individual in consultation with his or her priest may be following an amended "exercise routine." Perhaps the person has medical or personal reasons for mitigating the fast; perhaps they are just not spiritually strong enough, and the long weeks of Lent drag them down. Exercise should bend, not break, the athlete, and a weaker athlete must start with a smaller weight.

We don't say the priest gives a "dispensation" for this-it's not like bending a law, the cop letting you go without a ticket. We say the priest gives a "blessing" to adjust the fast to your needs, like a doctor adjusting a prescription for your health. If we notice somebody else is not keeping the fast, it's none of our business.

Not just individuals but whole parishes may observe the fast differently. From earliest years fasting followed community rather than universal guidelines. When St. Monica visited Rome she was surprised that they did not fast on Saturday before the Sunday Eucharist. She asked her pastor, St. Ambrose, about this. He famously replied not to be concerned about it, but "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

I was once explaining the fast to a Catholic friend and she said, "People would just shop around for the most lenient priest." That makes sense if you're trying to get away with the minimal reparation. But if your desire is to grow in spiritual health, it's like shopping for the trainer who'd give you the shortest exercise routine, or the doctor who'd make you take just half your pills. What's the point?

We begin the pre-Lenten season with the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, noting that the prideful one who boasts "I fast twice a week" gains nothing by it. On Pascha, when the long fast is over, we hear St. John Chrysostom's sermon reminding us that those who came to the vineyard at the eleventh hour received the same reward. Everyone is welcome to the Paschal feast, no matter how they kept the fast.

"You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is fully laden; feast sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away. O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown."

We have fasted all together, and at the end we feast all together, a bit stronger than when we started. No wonder we feel like celebrating. Pass the fatted calf!

CHURCH NEWS: RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS OVER 16,000 PARISHES IN RUSSIA

Story from <http://www.3saints.com>

There are 16,195 registered parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church on Russian territory, with a total of 17,480 serving priests and deacons. These figures were quoted in an appeal by Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II, made public at the diocesan assembly of Moscow's clergy in Moscow on Tuesday.

In his address, Alexy disclosed that the Russian Orthodox Church at present has 131 dioceses, and the number of bishops is 155. Russia has 614 active monasteries - 295 men's monasteries and 319 nunneries. Their number does not include 160 monastery inns and 38 sketes (quiet monasteries).

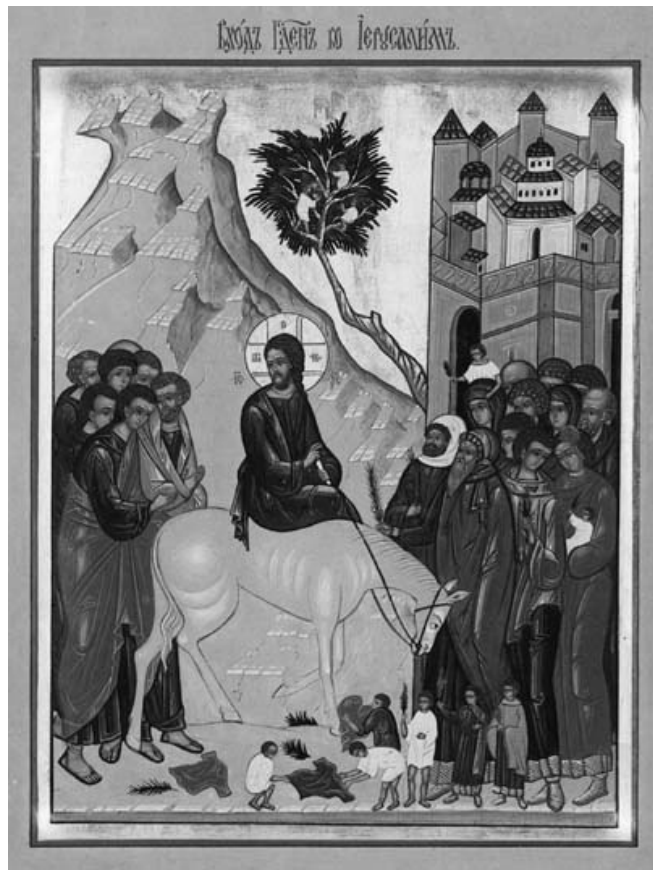
The Russian Orthodox Church runs 43 theological schools, 32 seminaries, 6 preparatory pastor courses, 4 theological academies, 2 Orthodox universities, 2 diocesan theological schools for women, and 1 divine institute. In addition, there are a number of choir conductor and icon-painting schools, and also, in Moscow alone, 135 parish Sunday schools.

Moscow today has 560 Orthodox churches and chapels and 959 clergymen. There are eight monasteries in the capital - four men's monasteries and four nunneries.

An additional note from Fr James: Here are some figures for comparison, which give something of an indication of the contemporary growth of the Church in Russia.

	Before the revolution	1941 (24 years later)	2003
Churches	51, 918	4, 225	16, 195
Monasteries	1, 025	20	614
Church schools	208	None	84+
Priests & deacons	70, 000	5, 665*	17, 480
Bishops	272	19	155

*In 1930, the communists announced that 42, 800 bishops, priests & deacons had died in prison or had been killed.



ВОСКРЕШЕНИЕ ЛАЗАРЯ И ВХОД ГОСПОДЕНЬ В ИЕРУСАЛИМ
The Resurrection of Lazarus & the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem

On the last weekend before Pascha (Пасха), the Church commemorates two great events: the raising of Lazarus from the dead and the triumphant entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

The raising of Lazarus is commemorated on the Saturday (Суббота Лазарева). Lazarus was a good friend of our Lord Jesus Christ. He lived in Bethany with his sisters Martha & Mary. When Jesus was traveling towards Jerusalem with His friends for the last time, a messenger told him that Lazarus was very sick. Martha & Mary had sent the messenger to ask Jesus to come quickly. When He finally arrived, however, Lazarus had been dead for 4 days, and had already been buried.

Martha & Mary were very upset that their brother had died. Our Lord Jesus Christ was also very sad, and He too cried. But then He went into the tomb of Lazarus and said "Lazarus, come out!" The people thought that this was very strange, because the body of Lazarus had even started to rot & smell. But Lazarus did come out, still dressed in his "grave clothes". The people were amazed and many began to believe that Jesus Christ was their Saviour. So many people believed in Him because of Lazarus, that the Jewish priests even wanted to kill Lazarus! But he lived for a long time after that, and eventually became a bishop on the island of Cyprus.

By crying when He found out that Lazarus had died, our Lord Jesus Christ showed us that He was truly a man, because He felt sadness over the death of His friend. But when He raised him from the dead, He showed us that He was truly God, with the power to overturn death.

On the Sunday we commemorate the triumphant Entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into the city of Jerusalem. Sometimes we call this feast "Неделя Ваий" or "Palm Sunday". We also call it "Вербное Воскресение" which means "pussy-willow Sunday".

Our Lord Jesus Christ entered triumphantly into Jerusalem just a week before His suffering and glorious Resurrection. Although riding humbly on a donkey, Christ was welcomed by the people as a great King. Many people knew that He had raised Lazarus from the dead and believed that He was the Saviour that God had promised long ago to send them. They cried out "Hosanna!" This is a Hebrew word of praise that means, "Save us, we pray!" They also waved palm branches. They did this because it was the custom in those days to welcome home a king who had just won a battle by waving palm & other green branches. On this feast-day we too hold palm branches and pussy-willow branches to welcome a king who has won a great battle: our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, who has won a battle against death.

The Russian Orthodox tradition of blessing pussy-willow branches came about because there are no palm trees in Russia.

At the vigil service on the night before Palm Sunday, small bunches of pussy-willow are blessed with Holy Water by the priest. In the special prayer of blessing, the priest asks our Lord and God Jesus Christ to look after all those who welcome Him with pussy-willow branches and palm branches, and to grant that we will be able to celebrate His glorious Resurrection on the feast-day of Пасха. We keep the blessed pussy-willows in our icon-corners. Some people also take them and place them on the graves of their relatives, as a sign of hope in the rising again of the dead.

Lots of people knew that Jesus Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead and lots of people welcomed Him into Jerusalem as their King. But many of these people were to betray Him just a little while later. We are the same: we praise Jesus Christ as our King & God, but then we betray Him by not doing what He wants us to do. Whenever you see a bunch of the blessed pussy-willows, remind yourself of His great power over death, and that you should always honour Him as a great King - not only in what you say, but also in what you do.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Metropolitan Laurus, Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Alypy, George, Seraphim, Irene, Ioann, Sergei

Special needs: Katherine, David, Nina & family, Paraskeva

Preparing for marriage: Peter & Svetlana, Daniel & Ioanna, Gregory & Heather

Preparing for baptism: Margaret

Newly-baptised: Sebastian

Newly-reposed: Archpriest Alexei (Dmitrieff), Reader Leonid (Bihancov)

GOSFORD SERVICES IN MAY

Our lack of a permanent church building means that, once again, none of the Easter services will be held in Gosford. May God grant that things be different in 2004!

4 May	Sunday	Thomas' Sunday Неделя Фомина - Антипасха Divine Liturgy	9.00 am
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The Schedule of Services distributed earlier in the year indicated that a service would be held on Sunday 25 May 2003. As the parish of Saint Nicholas, Newcastle, is celebrating it's parish feast-day that Sunday, it now seems likely that we will have no service on 25/3. An announcement about this will be made on Sunday 4/5.

NEWCASTLE EASTER SERVICES

<http://www.rocor.org.au/stnicholaschurch/>

19-го Апрель	суббота	Всенощная	6.00 ч.в.
20-го Апрель	воскресенье	ВХОД ГОСПОДЕНЬ В ИЕРУСАЛИМ Вербное Воскресенье Божественная Литургия	9.00 ч.у.
21-го Апрель	понедельник	Великий Понедельник Часы, изобразительныя, вечерня с литургией преждеосвященных даров	8.00 ч.у.
24-го Апрель	четверг	Великий Четверг Утренья с чтением двенадцати Евангелий	6.00 ч.в.
25-го Апрель	пятница	Великая Пятница Царские Часы Вечерня с выносом св. плащаницы Утренья с чином погребения св. плащаницы	8.00 ч.у. 2.00 дня 6.00 ч.в.

26-го Апрель	суббота	Великая Суббота Вечерня с литургией св. Василия Великаго Чтение книги Деяний апостолов Полунощница	8.00 ч.у. 8.00 ч.в. 11.30 ч.в.
27-го Апрель	воскресенье	СВЕТЛОЕ ХРИСТОВО ВОСКРЕСЕНИЕ Крестный ход, Пасхальная Утреня и Божественная Литургия	12.00 НОЧИ
19th April 20th April	Saturday Sunday	All-night vigil ENTRY OF THE LORD INTO JERUSALEM: PALM SUNDAY	6.00 pm 9.00 am
21st April	Monday	Divine Liturgy Great & Holy Monday Hours, typika, vespers with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	8.00 am
24th April	Thursday	Great & Holy Thursday Matins with the reading of the 12 Gospels	6.00 pm
25th April	Friday	Great & Holy Friday Royal hours Vespers with the bringing out of the Holy Shroud Matins with the service of lamentations before the tomb	8.00 am 2.00 pm 6.00 pm
26th April	Saturday	Great & Holy Saturday Vespers with the Liturgy of St Basil the Great Reading of the Acts of the Holy Apostles Midnight Office	8.00 am 8.00 pm 11.30 pm
27th April	Sunday	RESURRECTION OF CHRIST - HOLY PASCHA Procession, Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy	12.00 am

Father James tries to prepare this newsletter to coincide with each service at Gosford. Let him know at least a week in advance if there is anything that you would like included (prayer requests, news, announcements). You can call him on 02-9721-2659 or email him at fr.james.carles@rocor.org.au.