

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

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

~ Number 32, 29 August 2004 ~

НЕРУКОТВОРЕННАГО ОБРАЗА ГОСПОДНЯ The Icon of the Lord "Not-made-by-hands"



On August 29th each year (August 16th on the Church calendar), the Church honours an icon of our Lord Jesus Christ called "Нерукотвореннаго" or "Not-made-by-hands".

In the times when our Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth, there was a brave and good King called Abgar living far away to the East in a city called Edessa. He suffered from the terrible disease of leprosy.

King Abgar heard accounts of our Lord Jesus Christ and all the people that he had healed. He resolved to write a letter to Jesus and ask for his help. He sent his letter with a painter, asking him to paint for him a portrait of Christ. If Christ could not come to see him, King Abgar believed that even a picture of so great a healer would help him.

When Jesus received the letter he told the painter, whose name was Ananias, that he could not go to Edessa. But to help the good King, he took a cloth napkin and wiped His face. When He gave the napkin to the painter, it had a perfect image of His face on it! Jesus told the painter that King Abgar's leprosy would be almost completely healed. He promised that He would later send an apostle to Edessa to completely heal the King. The words of Christ were written down by the painter and taken back to King Abgar with the napkin.

When King Abgar received the napkin, he kissed it with joy. Miraculously, he was healed of his leprosy! Only a small trace remained on his face. He treasured the Holy Napkin sent to him by Christ.

After the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, the Apostle Thaddeus traveled to Edessa. Thaddeus was one of the 70 lesser Apostles, and had been born in Edessa. He taught King Abgar all about the Holy Gospel and baptised him. When King Abgar came up out of the water, his leprosy was completely gone! He asked Saint Thaddeus to teach the people of Edessa about Christ. They all asked to be baptised. The people then smashed all their old idols. King Abgar took the Holy Napkin and, having put it into a special frame, placed it in a small hollow over the city gates. Above it he wrote "O Christ our God, no-one who hopes in You will be disappointed".

All of this is recorded by an early Christian bishop, Eusebius in a book called "A History of the Church", a book still widely available. Eusebius lived from 260-339 AD. He tells us in his book that he himself had read the original documents in Edessa.

We can see that King Abgar was a good and wise king. He was a pagan who had prayed to idols, but his heart was touched when he heard about Jesus. He invited Jesus to come and live in his city at a time when the most important priests and teachers in Jerusalem, the spiritual leaders of god's chosen people, wanted to kill Jesus!

Sadly, one of King Abgar's great-grandsons was a wicked man who closed the churches and brought back idols to Edessa. To protect the Holy Napkin, the Bishop of Edessa climbed up secretly at night and made a wall in front of it. It was forgotten about for many centuries until the Persian army was attacking Edessa in 615 AD. A later Bishop of Edessa saw it in a dream and uncovered it. It was later carried out to battle and the Persians were beaten.

The Holy Napkin was kept in Edessa until 944 AD. It was then moved to Constantinople, the capital of the Orthodox Christian empire. It arrived in Constantinople on August 29th (August 16th on the Church calendar), which is the day the Orthodox Church now honours it. The Holy Napkin disappeared in the 1200's when the Catholic crusaders attacked Constantinople.

When icons of our Lord Jesus Christ are taken to a priest to be blessed, he reads a special prayer over them. The prayer says that Jesus, "having touched a napkin to His divine Face, made an image, which He sent to Abgar, prince of Edessa. Through it He healed him from his sickness, and upon all who came to this image and venerated it with faith, He gave countless healings and many blessings". The priest then prays that God

will give the icon "the blessing and strength which the holy Icon Not-made-by-hands richly acquired from the touching of the holy and most-pure Face of Thy Beloved Son".

"СВЯТОСТЬ ЦЕРКВИ"

Протоиерей Валентин Свенцицкий

(Из Приходского Листка Иоанно-Предтеченского Собора в г. Вашингтоне, прот. Виктор Потапов, редактор)

Протоиерей Валентин Свенцицкий (1882-1931 гг.) - замечательный пастырь-исповедник, много пострадавший от безбожной власти. Приводится отрывок из одной проповеди, произнесенной о. Валентином в 1920-х годах, в страшную пору гонения на Русскую Церковь.

Церковные недостатки - это явление не нашего времени, они были всегда.

Достаточно вспомнить слова святого Григория Богослова, который говорил: «Погибла вера в Бога». Достаточно вспомнить слова святого Иоанна Златоуста, который в беседе на Послания к Коринфянам говорил: «У нас в Церкви осталось много лишь хороших воспоминаний, что и раньше, и ныне собирались для песнопений, но раньше, когда собирались для песнопений, было единомыслие, но теперь едва ли найдешь хотя бы одного человека, который был бы твоим единомышленником».

Ведь это все говорилось тогда, когда еще были живы некоторые отцы Никейского Собора, когда только что почил Афанасий Великий, когда были еще живы Василий Великий, Григорий Богослов, Иоанн Златоуст.

Но что это значит?

Это значит только то, что Церковь земная имеет много недостатков, которые есть результат слабостей и немощей человеческих.

Могут ли поколебать святость Церкви прегрешения отдельных людей? Какой соблазн, какое величайшее неразумие говорить, что я уйду из Церкви, потому что встретился с недостойным пастырем, что я не буду больше верить в Церковь, потому что пришлось пережить тяжкое личное впечатление от того или иного носителя благодати.

Святость Церкви не в этом заключается - она заключается в таинствах, в святости благодати Божией, во всем том добром, что сия благодать сделала с душами человеческими; она заключается в том сонме святых, которые спасены сей благодатию, она заключается в каждом истинно добром движении нашей души.

Это светлое и святое составляет святость Церкви. А грехи наши - болезни наши, они есть немощи греховные, которые мы омываем и очищаем в этой Святой Церкви Христовой.

Вот потому как в личной нашей жизни да не смущает нас лукавая мысль о ненужности наших трудов, когда мы чувствуем немощь грехов наших, так да не смущается в нас и наша вера в святость Церкви, когда мы видим те или иные недостатки в земной Церкви.

Наше сознание грехов не уныние должно вызывать в нас, а лишь еще большее и большее старание совершать работу Господню. Сознание недостатков церковной жизни должно влечь за собою не отхождение от Святой Церкви, а еще большую к ней любовь и желание служить на пользу церковную.

Протоиерей Валентин СВЕНЦИЦКИЙ

"THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH"

[From the Parish Life Bulletin of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Washington, DC, Archpriest Victor Potapov, Editor.]

Within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad there are heated arguments about the paths it is to follow in the future, and about the question of unification with the Moscow Patriarchate. Frequently, one hears sharp attacks directed at individual bishops and Church officials. Sometimes the objections come down to this: we cannot unite with the Church in Russia because some of the clergy there have collaborated with the KGB and been corrupted, and they and have not repented of that.

Can inadequacies of individual people sully the holiness of the Church?

A partial answer to that question was given by Archpriest Valentin Sventsitsky (1882-1931), a remarkable pastor and confessor, who suffered a great deal at the hands of the atheist regime. The following is an excerpt from a homily given by Fr. Valentin in the 1920s, during an awful time of persecution against the Russian Church:

Inadequacies in the Church are not just a contemporary manifestation; they have always existed.

It is enough but to recall the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, 'Faith in God has perished'. It is enough but to recall the words of St. John Chrysostom, who in a talk on the Epistle to the Corinthians said, 'In the Church, we only have a plethora of fond memories that both in times past and now people would gather together to chant. However, before, when people gathered together to chant, there was oneness of mind, while now you would be hard put to find even one person who would be of one mind with you'.

And this used to be said then, at a time when some of the Nicene Fathers were still alive, when Athanasios the Great had just reposed, when Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom were alive.

But what does this mean?

It means only that as the result of human weaknesses and illnesses, the Church on earth has many inadequacies.

Can transgressions of individual people shake the holiness of the Church? What a temptation, what a great misunderstanding is expressed if I should leave the Church because I have encountered an unworthy pastor, if I should no longer believe in the Church because one or another bearer of grace has made a bad personal impression on me.

The holiness of the Church does not rest in that. It rests in the *Mysteries*, in the holiness of *God's Grace*, in all of the good which that *Grace* has done for men's souls; it rests in that assembly of saints who were saved by that grace, it rests in every truly kind impulse of our souls.

These glorious and holy [things] are what comprise the holiness of the Church. Our sins - our illnesses - are sinful weaknesses that we wash and cleanse in that Holy Church of Christ.

For that reason, let us not be troubled in our personal life by the evil idea that we need not labor when we weakened by our sins, and likewise let us not, let our faith not, be troubled by doubts in the holiness of the Church whenever we see some inadequacy or other in the earthly Church.

Our recognizing of our sins should evoke in us not despondency, but only ever greater effort to do the Lord's work. Recognition of inadequacies in church life should bring about not estrangement from the Holy Church, but even greater love for it, and a desire to serve for the good of the Church.

Archpriest Valentin Svetsitsky

PARISH LIFE: FEAST-DAY CELEBRATIONS

This year, the feast-day of Saint Panteleimon was observed twice: firstly on the eve of the feast and on the day itself; and secondly on the Saturday & Sunday after the feast.

Father James served matins for Saint Panteleimon on the evening of Sunday August 8th, a quiet but well-attended service. The following morning, he and Father John served Divine Liturgy at 8.00am, the first week-day Divine Liturgy served in our new church. These services were very much a parish affair, and it was nice to observe the feast in relative peace and quiet. The church looked particularly beautiful, Katya Lugovoy having

recently completed a new set of gold vestments for the church, and a number of additional icons having been hung.

On the following Saturday night, vigil was served. On the morning of Sunday August 15th, Father James served a lesser blessing of water. Vladika Hilarion arrived for the Divine Liturgy at 9.00am. Together with Vladika and Fathers James and John, deacons Fathers German and Christopher served, assisted by subdeacon Nicholas Martinov (Fairfield) and reader Nicholas Krivosheev (Cabramatta).

The festive lunch was held at our old "home", the Narara Community Centre, with over 150 people in attendance. The sisterhood's wine auction and raffle was a great success, with over \$1500 being raised. Many commented on the success of the day, and all present felt that a spirit of peace and cooperation had returned to parish life. Glory be to God for all things!

PARISH LIFE: RAFFLE PRIZE WINNERS

The following people won prizes in the sisterhood's Russian-themed raffle, drawn at lunch on Sunday August 15th:

- 1st: Tamara Makarov (Russian Bears)
- 2nd: S. Grabovsky (Russian doll)
- 3rd: Bill Reid (balalaika)
- 4th: Olga Tonkikh (decoupage picture)
- 5th: Mrs Tidenburg (vodka & goblets)
- 6th: A. Kulikov (shawl)
- 7th: V. Kutukov (Aeroflot souvenir)
- 8th: G. Korelin (scarf)
- 9th: Matushka Marina Polorotov (wine basket)
- 10th: O. Semenov (bowl and spoon)
- 11th: Vlad Golovin (painting)
- 12th: V. Shulgin (Siberian tiger balsamic drink)

Congratulations to all who won, and many thanks to all who bought and sold tickets!

PARISH LIFE: FATHERS' DAY BBQ

On Sunday September 5th after church, the sisterhood will be holding a special Father's Day BBQ. Meat, salads, beer, wine & soft drinks will all be available. The cost for adults will be \$5.00 and for children (6-16), \$2.00. All are invited! Please come along, and bring your fathers!

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The last Parish Council meeting was held on 4.8.2004. In attendance were Father James, Starosta Alexander Yakimov (accompanied by his son Con), Head Sister Olga

Petroff, Treasurer Nina Golovin, Secretary Katya Marcotrigiano, and council members Bill Reid, Rick Golovin and Don Kobeleff. Apologies were received from Katya Rubbo and George Fomin. The proceedings included:

- A prolonged discussion of certain recent misunderstandings and tensions within the parish. It was agreed that the starosta, Alexander Yakimov, would make a statement clarifying a number of issues. A statement was agreed upon by the council, & a copy is included with this newsletter;
- A review of the financial position of the parish. It was agreed that a \$10,000 payment would be made on the mortgage, but that repayments would remain at the previous rate;
- A report from Rick Golovin on the recent fire and safety inspection of the church and hall and the necessary changes made as a result, including the fitting of new door handles and additional extinguishers. He also reported on the subsequent council inspection and the need for further minor changes;
- A report from Head Sister Olga Petroff on preparations for the celebration of our feast-day on August 15th;
- A report from Father James on his discussions with Dmitri & Irina Kuznetsov concerning a parish Russian school to operate from 2005, and the preparation of a questionnaire for parents;
- Consideration of the fact that membership dues should be paid from October 2004. Father James and Katya Marcotrigiano will work on letters to current and potential parish members; and
- A number of minor items.

Don Kobeleff indicated that he will no longer assist in the sale of candles of Sunday mornings. After assisting for a number of years, he wished to step aside and give the opportunity for some of the other young men in the parish to assist the starosta. The Parish Council endorsed Don's intentions in this regard, supporting Mr Yakimov's desire to have the younger men more actively involved.

The parish Council is due to meet next on 2.9.2004.

NEED A BIBLE?

A friend of the parish, a young lady with a great love for the Holy Scriptures, recently donated a number of copies of the Bible to give to those who needed one. Some have notes in them, but all of them are in very good condition. All in English, there are four copies of the "New Living Translation" (including one "Life Application Bible"); a copy of the "New American Standard Bible"; a copy of the King James Version; and a small "New International Version" New Testament with Psalms. If you would like one, simply ask Father James.

"A Bible that is falling apart is usually being read by someone that isn't".

Anonymous.

VARIOUS PARISH LIFE & NEWS ITEMS: IN BRIEF

- Work is continuing towards the opening of a parish Russian School for the 2005 school year. Parish members Irina Kouznetsov, a qualified teacher, her husband Dmitri, and Father James met last month and considered a range of issues associated with the school. Father James is working on making available the Church's guidelines for parish schools and parent committees available in Russian and English, whilst Irina and Dmitri have put together a questionnaire for prospective parents. An inaugural parents' committee meeting should be convened during September;
- George Karmadonoff, Victor Bendeovski and Paul Pereboyeff have been working on plans for a parish picnic day, most likely to be held on the October long weekend. They have been checking out venues and we should know of the arrangements soon. This should be a special event in the life of the parish, a chance for all to get together informally and relax;
- Pussy willow plants remain available for those interested. Please see Matushka Marie if you would like one to plant;
- A collection will be taken after the Divine Liturgy today for the family of a priest who recently passed away suddenly at the age of only 44. The priest, Father Andrei Trufanov, was assigned to our parish in Bari, Italy. He left behind a matushka and four young children. The Western European Diocese is able to provide only 250 euros a month, the equivalent of approximately \$430.00 Australian, and the Synod has appealed to all parishes for help;
- Father James gave a talk at Croydon on the evening of Thursday 26th August about the ever-memorable Father Seraphim Rose, a priest-monk of our Church who passed away in 1982. Also speaking was Vladika Hilarion. A great many people attended and discussion ensued;
- Earlier on the same day, Father James attended, with Vladika Hilarion's blessing, a training course offered by an organisation called 'Focus on the Family' (www.families.org.au). The training related to an educational program called 'No Apologies: The truth about life, love and sex'. Targeted at high school students, it is designed to help them make a wise choice interms of their health, emotions, and spiritual life by abstaining from sexual activity before marriage. He is working on a presentation to the young people of this parish and the Wallsend parish in the near future, and will also give a presentation at this year's syezd.

Father James tries to prepare this newsletter to coincide with each Sunday service at Gosford. You can call him about it at home on 4342-0015, on his mobile on 0428-639156 or email him at the following address: rev.james.carles@rocor.org.au.