

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК
PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 61, December 2006 ~

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEANUP ON DECEMBER 30TH

The Parish Council has decided that Saturday December 30th will be a general clean-up day at church, the first one since Great Lent. This will be a major clean-up, with everything in the church and hall being thoroughly washed, scrubbed and polished in preparation for our Christmas services on January 6th and 7th. Many hands make light work, so all those who are able are asked to attend. A list of tasks will be prepared to ensure that everyone has something to do. A light Lenten lunch will be served afterwards for all those working.

**CHURCH LIFE: AN EXPANDED SESSION OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
CONCLUDES**

An expanded session of the Synod of Bishops was held in New York City from December 7-10, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus. Participating in this session were the following bishops: Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany; Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand; Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America; Bishop Evtikhii of Ishim and Siberia; Bishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe; Bishop Daniel of Erie; Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan; Bishop Agapit of Stuttgart and Bishop Peter of Cleveland.

The Synod of Bishops made the following decision on the report made by Protopriest Alexander Lebedeff on the 8th joint meeting of the Commissions:

- To take his report into consideration and approve the Commissions' document titled "Summation of the Joint Work of the Commissions."
- To include the text of the document, already adopted at the 6th joint meeting of the ecclesiastical Commissions and approved by the Holy Synods of both parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, the "Addendum to the 'Act of Canonical Communion.'" (This text concerns the introduction of a transitional period of special liturgical commemoration in places where it is necessary in the parishes of the Russian Church Abroad, in the spirit of oikonomia, at the discretion of the Ruling Bishop. This transitional period, our hierarchs hope, will help the gradual transition into unity of the Russian Orthodox Church— *Ed.*)

- To approve the plan proposed by the Commissions on the time, place and rite of the ceremony of the signing of the "Act of Canonical Communion" in May 2007 (more detailed information on this will be forthcoming— *Ed.*).
- To instruct Priest Serafim Gan, in coordination with the President of the Commission on talks with the Moscow Patriarchate, His Eminence Archbishop Mark, to develop a detailed plan for a visit to Russia by a delegation of the Russian Church Abroad, to be headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus.

In January, 2007, a delegation headed by His Grace Bishop Peter of Cleveland will be sent to Buenos Aires and South America to conduct services and lead meetings to discuss the approaching execution of the Act of Canonical Communion.

In addition to these matters, other current events in church life were discussed.

On Saturday, December 9, the participants of the Synod of Bishops performed a funeral *in absentia* for His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, who reposed on September 12/25 of this year, along with a multitude of clergymen and a male choir under the direction of Peter A Fekula. His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and His Eminence Archbishop Hilarion both delivered eulogies. The following day, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and the aforementioned bishops officiated at Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Sign at the headquarters of the Synod of Bishops in New York on its feast day, the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, and the 25 th anniversary of the glorification of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

ADDRESS OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA TO THE GOD-LOVING FLOCK

"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." (2 John 1:3)

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia greets its brother archpastors, reverend pastors, monastics and pious laypersons, and congratulates them on the feast day of the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, the Protectress of the Russian diaspora. It was in the presence of this great holy icon that the sessions of the expanded Synod of Bishops were held, expanded because of the importance of the matters at hand, primarily the reestablishment of the canonical unity of the Local Russian Church.

The Resolution of the IV All-Diaspora Council stated: "Bowing down before the *podvig* [spiritual feats] of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, glorified both by the Russian Church Abroad and by the Russian Church in the Fatherland, we see within them the spiritual bridge which rises above the abyss of the lethal division in the Russian Church and makes possible the restoration of that unity which is desired by all."

On the basis of this Resolution, the Council of Bishops of May 15-19, 2006, decreed: "To confirm the Act of Canonical Communion in principle, though with the stipulation that certain points be resolved..." This decision of the Council of Bishops also states that "the final confirmation of the text of the 'Act,' as well as details as to its ceremonial signing, is conferred upon the Synod of Bishops."

The Synod of Bishops, during its meeting of August 24/September 6, 2006, decreed: "On the basis of the decision of the Council of Bishops of May 15-19, 2006, to confirm and approve the 'Act on Canonical Communion' in its revised form as prepared by the church Commissions at the seventh joint meeting," and "[i]n accordance with the directions of the Council of Bishops of 2006, to instruct the Commission on discussions with the Moscow Patriarchate, jointly with the Commission on dialog with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, to work out the details of the ceremony of the signing of the 'Act' and the Rite of establishment of canonical communion of both parts of the Russian Orthodox Church." Further, in the same decision, we read: "To consider at the next expanded session of the Synod of Bishops, to be scheduled at the time of the feast day of the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God this year, on the proposals prepared by the joint Commissions at their next meeting."

The Synod of Bishops, gathering now in its expanded form, after exhaustive deliberation, on November 25/December 8, 2006, unanimously adopted the Resolution stating: "To approve the proposals of the Commissions on the time, place and Rite of the ceremonious signing of the 'Act of Canonical Communion,'" and instructed designated individuals to "develop a detailed plan for a visit to Russia of a delegation of the Russian Church Abroad headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus for the ceremonious signing of the 'Act.'"

Of course, at this stage, it proved impossible to fully resolve all questions, as was noted in the Epistle of the Council of Bishops of 2006: "We do not intend to idealize the situation; without a doubt, there are problems in both parts of the Russian Church which demand correction." This is pointed to by the members of the IV All-Diaspora Council, who proposed in their Resolution that these matters be relegated to a future Local [*Pomestny*] Council: "We hope that the forthcoming Local Council of One Russian Church will settle remaining unresolved church problems."

One of these problems is the continuing participation of representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches. The IV All-Diaspora Council addressed this fact in its Resolution: "From discussions at the Council it is apparent that the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes confusion among our clergy and flock. With heartfelt pain we ask the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to heed the plea of our flock to expediently remove this temptation."

Therefore, the Synod of Bishops viewed in a positive light the resolution of the Diocese of the Midwest of the Orthodox Church in America, in which the Diocesan Assembly requested the immediate withdrawal of the Orthodox Church in America from the National and World Councils of Churches. It becomes clear that the desire to remove this temptation is shared by the flocks of other Local Orthodox Churches.

We regard with pain that the discussion of the process of reconciliation of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church is not being conducted in the spirit of peace and mutual respect in all places. Especially harsh expressions are appearing in internet forums, in which some anonymous writers spread completely false information on the negotiating process, and also slander the First Hierarch, the bishops and clergymen of our Church.

In its September Address, the Synod of Bishops stated: "We do not intend to depart from our positions of principle, in particular with regard to the ecumenical movement. We intend to continue to firmly speak out in condemnation of the so-called 'branch theory' and of joint prayer with heretics, which is emphasized in our anathema of ecumenism adopted by the Council of Bishops of 1983. This is reflected in the documents of the church Commissions confirmed by both Holy Synods and published in the official publications of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. From this we see that in the Moscow Patriarchate, our attitude towards the heresy of ecumenism has long ago been absorbed. That is why we are not compromising the inherited principles which have always guided us..."

"We will continue to maintain the spirit of our great fathers, the founders of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, following their legacy and the historical path of our Church. To carry this great inheritance to Russia is the mission we strive to fulfill."

The participants of this expanded session of the Synod of Bishops confirm this good intention, hoping that the process of reconciliation between the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church will further serve towards bringing into church life all the people of Russia, "in the Fatherland and in the diaspora."

In the spirit of love and peace, we speak all of you, dear fathers, brothers and sisters, the words of the Apostle:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

The Epistle of the Council of Bishops of 2006 contains the following appeal:

"And so, we turn to our dear flock with the prayerful call to set aside quarrels and differences, and to join together for the salvific task of reestablishing the unity of the Russian Church."

We repeat this plea, and also these words of edification from the "Epistle of the Council of Bishops to the God-loving Flock":

"We now call upon our God-loving flock to prayerfully support the constructive task begun by our IV All-Diaspora Council. Its culmination will be the reestablishment of the unity of the Local Russian Church desired by all."

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11). Amen.

+ Laurus,

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York,
First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

+ Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany.

+ Hilarion, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand.

+ Kyrill, Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America.

+ Evtikhii, Bishop of Ishim and Siberia.

+ Michael, Bishop of Geneva and Western Europe.

+ Gabriel, Bishop of Manhattan.

+ Agapit, Bishop of Stuttgart.

+ Peter, Bishop of Cleveland.

November 26/December 9, 2006

PARISH LIFE: RUSSIAN SCHOOL CONCERT ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 3RD

The second concert of our parish school was held on Sunday December 3rd, with a number of people staying after Divine Liturgy to watch the children's performances. The first part of the concert was a play based on the life of Saint Innocent of Alaska, the patron saint of the school. It followed the story of his life from birth until his election as Metropolitan of Moscow, covering his renowned missionary work in Alaska and his consecration as a bishop after the repose of his wife. Beautifully presented by the children and supported with lovely costumes and other effects, the play was a joy to watch. It was performed in English, and it is hoped that it is the first of many plays presenting spiritual themes from Holy Scripture and Tradition. The second part of the concert consisted of Russian-language items including a play based on the fable of "The Dragonfly and the Ant". Presentation of report cards followed. Thanks are due to our teacher, Irina Kuznetsova, to Matushka Marie, and to Lydia Pereboeff for their hard work to make the concert a success. School has now finished for the year, and will recommence, God willing, in February-March 2007.

DIOCESAN LIFE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

Parishes of our Diocese are obliged to take up a number of charitable collections in the course of the year. In November, a collection is taken up for the Synod of bishops' Charitable Fund. Our collection was taken up on Sunday November 19th, and raised \$335.75 for needy churches and parishes throughout the Church Abroad. A collection is taken up in December - on the Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple on December 4th or the Sunday closest to it - for suffering children in Russia and the other countries of the former USSR. Our collection was taken up on Sunday December 3rd and raised \$200.50. May the Lord bless those who contributed!

PARISH LIFE: A NEW ICON IN CHURCH

As of Sunday December 17th, parishioners and friends will notice a large and beautiful new icon in our church at West Gosford. Situated just near the side entrance to the church, the icon depicts our Lord Jesus Christ surrounded by the Holy Archangels, together with 4 icons of the Mother of God and 51 different saints. Entitled "An indication of which Saints have been given the grace of healing from God, and when their commemoration occurs", the icon explains the circumstances in which each of the saints is known to provide help to those who turn to them. For example, the Prophet Elijah helps in time of drought, Saint Katherine is appealed to during difficulty in childbirth, the prayers of Holy Apostle Paul are known to protect children from sudden death, and Saint Panteleimon comes to the aid of all seeking relief from sickness of any kind. The icon is a testament to the extent to which prayer was once the great recourse of Christians in times of difficulty, and it is hoped that it will help all of us to be more prayerful ourselves and more mindful of the power of the prayers of the saints. As the text on the icon is in Church Slavonic, Father James has been working on a booklet that shows which saint is which and provides an English translation of their names and the circumstances in which they can help. It is hoped that this will be available soon, and that a Russian version will follow shortly afterwards. The booklet text will also be available on the website. The icon was given to Father James for our church by Hieromonk Joachim of Saint John the Baptist Skete in Kentlyn, and the frame was made by Protodeacon Basil Hadarin of the Cabramatta parish. May the Lord bless them for their kindness!

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The 2006-07 Parish Council met for the first time on Tuesday December 12th. The meeting was a little longer than usual, with Father James setting out what he saw as the tasks of the Parish Council during the coming year. On the administrative & management side of parish life, these included balancing mortgage repayments and operating expenses, fundraising, compiling an inventory of church property for insurance purposes, and attending to a number of legal obligations. On the social and spiritual side, a priority

identified was the organisation of social activities that will give greater opportunities for the development of Christian fellowship amongst parish members and friends. Other matters reported on or discussed include: the decision of the Synod of Bishops concerning the relationship of our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia with the Moscow Patriarchate; the November Annual General Meeting; the possibility of the parish undertaking charitable work; a pre-Christmas church cleanup; our book project; fundraising events in 2007; the purchase of software to assist with inventory and with other aspects of parish management; and a great deal more. Detailed news about some of these matters can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. God willing, the Parish Council will meet next on Tuesday February 5th, 2007.

DIOCESAN LIFE: RECENT EPISCOPAL RESOLUTIONS

Two November resolutions from the Diocesan office concern prayers in this time of drought and the establishment of a Diocesan Youth Committee. In relation to the drought, Vladyka Hilarion wrote:

In view of the very serious drought which has affected many regions of Australia, bringing immense hardship to farmers, suffering to animals and threatening city dwellers with an insufficient water supply, I request the clergy and faithful of our Diocese to offer up fervent prayers to the Lord for the granting of the remission of our sins and for sending peaceful rains to our land. The clergy of all churches should include petitions for rain in the litanies, and, when it is convenient, serve a full moleben for rain together with a cross procession.

During the Divine Liturgy this Sunday we will begin to use in our services some of the petitions and a prayer from the Church's service "In Time of Drought". The prayer is one that can also be used in our private prayer at home, and is printed here in English:

O Master, Lord our God, Who didst hear Elijah the Tishbite because of his zeal for Thee, and for a time didst command that rain be held back from being sent unto the earth, and again at his prayer didst grant it fruit-bearing rain: Do Thou Thyself, O Master of all, Who art being entreated, out of Thy deep compassion grant abundant rain unto Thine inheritance; and overlooking our sins, do Thou send down rain upon every place entreating and praying for it. Make glad the face of the earth, for the sake of Thy poor people and infants, and animals and all others, for they trust in Thee, that Thou wilt give drink unto them in due season. For Thou art our God, a God Who showeth mercy and saveth, and unto Thee do we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Many families in rural Australia are enduring great hardship as a result of the drought. Together with our prayers, they also need material help. The faithful are also encouraged to remember and assist those affected by bushfires.

A decision will be made later concerning the best time and date to serve the full moleben for rain.

The second resolution - concerning a Diocesan Youth Committee - sought to give effect to decisions at the 4th All-Diaspora Council concerning youth work. The Diocesan Youth Committee Chairman is Archpriest Gabriel Makarov from Brisbane, and he is to be assisted in his work by Reader Alexander Paramonov from Geelong and Katie Barlow from Sydney. The task of this committee is "the coordination of the work of the spiritual upbringing of the youth in all parishes and communities of the diocese". More news on the work of this committee will be presented as it comes to hand.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 4TH ANNUAL FISHING COMPETITION

Preparations are now underway for our 4th annual fishing competition. As well as being an important fundraising activity, our annual fishing competitions have become a social event of some importance, giving a diverse group of people the opportunity to get together to support the church by doing what they enjoy most. The competition will in 2007 will take place on 10th February. Further information will be available soon. Once again, the organisers are Paul Pereboeff (0414-950741) and Victor Bendeovski (0410-327635), and any questions or offers of assistance should be directed to them.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Our parishioners Antonina (Tialshinsky) & Victor; and also for Volodymyr, Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, Olga, Olga, Galina, Tatiana and Daniel

Expectant mothers: Tatiana, Susannah (Orthodox); Alison (non-Orthodox)

Families with new babies: Deacon Alexander, Matushka Larissa, baby Gabriel and his three big brothers; Vladimir and Jasmin, their new baby boy and his big brother Alexander

Newly-departed: Lyubov (Smieska), who passed away on Friday December 15th after a battle with cancer. Some parishioners will remember Mrs Smieska from our days at the Narara Community Centre.

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George, Theodore

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Our parish newsletter is published monthly. If you wish to receive it by post or email, please talk to Father James (0428-639156) or Katya Marcotrigiano, the parish secretary (4369-1765).

