

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church, Gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 53, March 2006 ~

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE 4TH ALL-DIASPORA COUNCIL OF
THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA**

Over three-quarters of the contents of this issue of the newsletter is material relating in one way or another to the forthcoming All-Diaspora Council. More reading material will be available in church on Sunday March 19th; an article by Archbishop Hilarion entitled "On the forthcoming All-Diaspora Council" («О предстоящем Всезарубежном Соборе») will be distributed. It is evident that both Metropolitan Laurus and Archbishop Hilarion wish us to be well-informed and to give careful AND prayerful consideration to the matters to be addressed by the All-Diaspora Council: reconciliation within the Russian Orthodox Church and the mission of our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia in the contemporary world. Please take the time to read the material made available by our bishops and to pray that God will guide them in their care for His Holy Orthodox Church.

**THE GREAT LENTEN EPISTLE OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN
LAURUS, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA**

*Honorable Reverend Father-concelebrants, dear in the Lord Brothers, Sisters and
Children!*

I greet all of you with the beginning of this salvific time, a time meant for spiritual introspection and self-examination. The Holy Church now calls upon us to ignite our spirits, to cleanse our hearts and to approach our God and Creator, our Heavenly Father and Dearest Friend, Who invites us into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Love, Mercy and Light. Weak by nature but strengthened by God's help, holding the staff of prayer, let us all commence this podvig and labor over ourselves! He who labors over his inner life during this Lenten time and declares war on his weaknesses shall not regret it, he will undoubtedly become better, he will rise at least a little from the ground and on the holy Paschal night "will enter into his Lord's joy," when, as the writer of the Church said: "the whole Church

(that is, all who are in the temple) form His Holy Church," and this is the unity with the Resurrected Christ of which the ninth part of the Creed teaches us.

Let us support each other upon this path leading towards renewal, as the ancient Jews once supported each other as they fled Egypt and headed for the Promised Land, when children and old people were taken up and carried and the strong and healthy helped the ailing. Let us also, week by week, approach the Pascha of Christ, this "fountain of incorruptible life," (second irmos of the Paschal canon).

Now I address a few words to the participants of the IV All-Diaspora Council, which will commence on the week of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women. First of all, "for the sake of ecclesiastical need" (Council of Antioch, Canon 20), prepare yourselves for the anticipated forthcoming Council and its difficult but great work, holy in its sacred importance, through fasting, frequent cleansing of your souls through confession and partaking of Christ's Holy Mysteries. I call upon all of you, dear brothers and sisters, to approach your selection as delegate seriously and responsibly, for the Church Herself calls upon each of you to this holy and inspired conciliar task. Earnestly pray to God that His all-good and all-salvific will be done at the forthcoming Council, that the participants of the Council be a living church force, capable on one hand of introducing peace and good order to our lives, and on the other hand, bringing mercy and Christ's truth and joy in the Holy Spirit to the hearts of all the children of our dear Church. Raise your prayers to the Most-Blessed Virgin Mother of God, our Protectress; to the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, to All Russian Saints and to St John, whose relics lie incorrupt in the Cathedral of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" in San Francisco, where the meetings of the Council will be held. By their prayerful intercession, may our Merciful Lord pour His blessed power into the IV All-Diaspora Council and the Council of Bishops that will follow, and "fulfill all our counsels" with the grace and providence of the Holy Spirit.

During Great Lent, I ask everyone to double their prayers for the deceased beacons of the Russian diaspora, the builders of Russia Abroad, the teachers and the mentors, that the Lord, through their fervent intercession, would lead us with His omnipotent and all-strengthening assistance in our forthcoming labors.

Let each delegate take my words not only into consideration, but unto fulfillment.

Once again I greet everyone with Great Lent and prayerfully wish everyone reconciliation with God and with His image as reflected in our neighbors. Let the heart of each one of us become the Life-bearing Sepulchre of the Lover of Man,

resurrected on the third day, our Lord; that in our eyes, in our lives, people would see this victory of Life, this Divine light. I believe that welcoming the Pascha of Christ in this way is the best testament of Orthodox Christianity in the face of our fallen world. In this illuminated condition, I hope, we will commence our conciliar work. May this be in all of us, for all of us. Amen.

With love in the Lord, and asking your holy prayers,

+Laurus,

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York

First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Theodore Saturday, 2006

ВЕЛИКОПОСТНОЕ ПОСЛАНИЕ ВЫСОКОТРЕОСВЯЩЕННЕЙШЕГО МИТРОПОЛИТА ЛАВРА, ПЕРВОИЕРАРХА РУССКОЙ ЗАРУБЕЖНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ

Всечестные отцы-сослужители, дорогие о Господе братие, сестры и дети!

Поздравляю всех вас с наступлением этого спасительного времени, которое предназначено для духовного самоуглубления и проверки своей жизни. Святая Церковь ныне нас призывает к тому, чтобы духом загореться, сердцем очиститься и приблизиться к нашему Богу и Творцу, нашему Небесному Отцу и Лучшему Другу, Который приглашает нас в Свое Царство, Царство Любви, Милости и Света. Немощные естеством, но препоясанные Божией помощью, с жезлом молитвы, все приступим к этому подвигу и будем работать над собой! Кто во время настоящего поста поработает над своей внутренней жизнью и объявит войну своим слабостям, тот не пожалеет, непременно станет лучше, поднимется хотя бы немного от земли и во святую пасхальную ночь «войдет в радость Господа своего», когда по выражению церковного писателя: «вся церковь (т.е. все находящиеся в храме) составляет Его Святую Церковь», и это есть наше единство с Воскресшим Христом, которому учит нас девятый член Символа Веры.

А на этом пути, ведущем нас к обновлению, будем поддерживать друг друга, как некогда поддерживали друг друга древние евреи, вышедшие из Египта и направившиеся в землю обетованную, когда детей и стариков на руках несли, крепкие и здоровые поддерживали больных. Вот так будем идти из недели в неделю к празднику Пасхи Христовой, к этому «Нетления источнику» (второй ирмос пасхального канона).

Теперь несколько слов к участникам предстоящего IV Всезарубежного Собора, который приступит к своей работе в Неделю Святых Жен-Мироносиц. Прежде всего, «ради назревших церковных нужд» (Антоих. Соб. пр. 20), приготовьтесь к желаемому и ожидаемому Собору и его многотрудным, но великим и святым в своей священной важности деяниям, постом, частым очищением своих душ покаянием и приобщением Святых Христовых Таин. Призываю всех вас, дорогие братья и отцы, к серьезному и ответственному отношению к своему избранию, ведь Сама Церковь зовет каждого из вас к этому святому и воодушевленному соборному труду. Обратитесь же ныне со всеусердной молитвой к Богу о том, чтобы на предстоящем Соборе совершилась Его всеблагая и всеспасительная воля, чтобы участники Собора явились живой церковной силой, способной с одной стороны внести мир и благоустройство в нашу жизнь, с другой - милость и истину Христову и радость о Святом Духе в сердца всех чад нашей дорогой Церкви. Возносите молитвы Преблагословенной Деве Богородице, нашей Одигитрии; святым новомученикам и исповедникам, всем святым Земли нашей Российской и святителю Иоанну, нетленно почивающему в Радосте-Скорбященском кафедральном соборе в г. Сан-Франциско, при котором будут проходить заседания Собора, чтобы, по их молитвенному ходатайству, Милостивый Господь наш излил на IV Всезарубежный Собор и последующий за ним Архиерейский Собор Свою благодатную силу и «все советы наши исполнил», благодатью и изволением Святого Духа.

Во время Великого поста прошу всех усугубить молитвы за усопших светил русского рассеяния, строителей Зарубежной Руси, наших подвижников, учителей и наставников, чтобы Господь, по их теплому предстательству, нас направил и сподобил бы нас всесильной и всеукрепляющей помощи Своей в предстоящих трудах.

Пусть каждый делегат примет эти мои слова не только к сведению, но и к исполнению.

Снова поздравляю всех с постом и молитвенно желаю всем примирения с Богом и образом Его, отражающимся в наших ближних. Пусть сердце каждого из нас станет Живоносным Гробом, в котором воссияет Триневно Восставший Человеколюбец Господь наш, чтобы в наших глазах, в нашей жизни люди видели эту победу Жизни, это сияние Божие. Верю, что таковая встреча Пасхи Христовой станет наилучшей проповедью православного христианства среди нашего падшего мира. В таком светлом состоянии, надеюсь, мы и приступим

к нашим соборным деяниям. Да будет это в каждом из нас, для всех нас.
Аминь.

С любовью о Господе и просьбой о святых молитвах,

+ Лавр,

Митрополит Восточно-Американский и Нью-Йоркский,

Первоиерарх Русской Зарубежной Церкви.

Феодоровская суббота 2006 г.

The following article was written by a priest of our church from England, Father Andrew Phillips. It was recently circulated amongst the clergy of our Diocese at Archbishop Hilarion's request; Vladika feels that it offers valuable insights in relation to the current discussion about reconciliation within the Russian Orthodox Church. With Vladika's view in mind, Father Andrew's article is offered here for consideration by the faithful.

ON THE RESTORATION OF EUCHARISTIC UNITY IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

FOREWORD

In wisdom, the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) have given a year's advance warning of the Fourth All-ROCOR Council in San Francisco in May 2006. This means that all the ROCOR faithful have adequate time to discuss the main item on the agenda of this Council. This item concerns the relations between the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), based in Moscow, and ROCOR, based in New York, and the possibility of restoring eucharistic communion and concelebration between them, following the end of the Cold War.

Over the last few months those interested have had time to put forward views, both for and against this restoration of eucharistic communion and concelebration between clergy. (Laypeople from both parts of the Russian Church have been taking communion in each others' churches for many years). With an open mind I have waited for several months to hear arguments for and against. However, it seems that those in favour have in the main kept silence, whereas those who are opposed to eucharistic communion have been very active.

Although there may be worthy arguments in favour of putting off the restoration of eucharistic unity, I have yet to hear them. What I have heard is voices opposed to this unity on political and secular grounds, speaking with cultural nostalgia, a lack of knowledge of facts and, often, only a scant knowledge of Orthodox Christianity. What are the main arguments of such voices?

1. ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE PAST

There are those who accuse the MP of being illegal, uncanonical and even possessing no grace ("bezblagodatnost"). The same people also appear to believe that ROCOR is in all ways pure and indeed infallible. What can be said of such black and white views?

Firstly, such views appear to deprive our Russian Orthodox brothers and sisters, many of them martyrs for the Faith, hundreds of millions of members of the MP over the last fifty to eighty years, of the hope of salvation. Is this realistic? Is this charitable? Is this the will of the God of Love?

Secondly, if the Moscow Patriarchate has no grace, then surely ROCOR has no grace. After the catastrophe of World War II, ROCOR was re-formed with bishops and clergy who escaped from the Soviet Union, mostly from the Ukraine and Belarus. They had all been ordained or consecrated by bishops of the MP, to which they themselves had belonged. Having escaped the Soviet nightmare and joined ROCOR, they went on to consecrate other ROCOR bishops who have consecrated our present bishops, who in turn have ordained clergy. Therefore, if our post-War bishops from the Soviet Union had no grace, then do we?

Thirdly, any theory that the MP is graceless surely belongs to the 'lightswitch theology' of sectarian Donatists. According to this, at one moment someone has grace, at another he does not. But we do not give out grace; God gives it. If the human side of the Faith, Apostolic Succession with the Orthodox Faith, exist, then how can the divine side of the Faith, the grace of God, not exist? Thus, at what moment did the MP lose grace? Were all of its members, from the Patriarch down to the last village babushka, affected by this loss of grace, or did 'patches of grace' somehow remain? And what of the ROCOR bishops in the Far East who joined the Moscow Patriarchate after the end of the Second World War, mistakenly believing that Communist persecution of the Church was over? Did they too 'lose grace'? And if so, when? The scope for absurdity here is very broad indeed

Fourthly, in comparing the post-Revolutionary Moscow Patriarchate with the pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church, such individuals display considerable ignorance, again making everything into black and white and idealizing the past. Let us look at some facts:

The pre-Revolutionary Russian Church was without a Patriarch, having a totally uncanonical structure, being governed in a completely Protestant style by a layman, by whom it was paralysed. Having deposed the great Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century, in the eighteenth century, Russian rulers decapitated and persecuted the Russian Church. Thus, Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), in his illuminating work *Russkaya Ideologiya (The Russian Ideology)*, describes how in the eighteenth century Catherine II closed 754 of the 954 Russian monasteries and the holy Metropolitans, Arseny of Rostov and Paul of Tobolsk, suffered a living martyrdom.

Then, and in the nineteenth century, many of the great monastic figures in the Russian Church were ignored, despised and exiled. St Paisius (Velichkovsky) escaped to Mt Athos and then lived in what is now Romania, the despised St Seraphim of Sarov awaited canonization for some seventy years, St Theophan the Recluse became a hermit, not preaching Orthodoxy openly. As for the State, it refused the Church the right to canonize its righteous, for fear of giving the Church power and influence. (Does this not resemble the recent MP, which until the year 2000, feared to glorify its own New Martyrs and Confessors?) It was only in the reign of the pious future martyr, Tsar Nicholas, that a few of these righteous and holy people were canonized.

As for the Patriarchate itself, it was restored only at the end of 1917, after the fall of the monarchy and the Kerensky Government, thanks largely to the heroic efforts of Metropolitan Antony of Kiev. For further details of how the Church lived before the Revolution, it is enough to read the first four volumes of the latter's Biography, compiled by the then Bishop Nikon (Rklitsky). In these we see how Metropolitan Antony, the most brilliant Russian bishop of the period, was exiled to remote parts of Russia by the government, which in itself he fervently supported (for he prophetically foresaw the alternative), becoming a Metropolitan only after the Revolution. Sergianism was prepared during the whole Synodal Period; it did not appear out of nowhere; it was merely the ultimate fruit of the deposition of Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century and the 'reforms' of Peter and his followers.

Finally, in comparing ROCOR and the MP, there are those who greatly idealize the clergy of ROCOR. Everybody knows that ROCOR has over the years made mistakes, indeed serious errors, leading to the retirement and defrocking of many clergy. Why compare the best of ROCOR with the worst of the MP? This is as unjust as comparing the best of the MP with the worst of ROCOR. In any organization, there are human-beings and we are all fallible.

For instance, critics of the MP often quote the famous words of St Ignatius (Brianchaninov) about outward restoration and inward rottenness, 'the gilding of cupolas'. These words refer back to the Gospel words of the Saviour to the Jews: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness (Matthew 23, 27)*. However, is it just to use these words to refer to all the 20,000 new and restored churches of the Patriarchate? After all, the 'gilding of cupolas' has happened in ROCOR too...Why one sweeping generalization for one part of the Russian Church and not for the other? He that is without sin...let him first cast a stone (John 8, 7).

2. ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT

Another thread in the criticisms of the MP is based on the inability to keep up with present reality, what the French call 'le passéisme'. Many such critics appear not to have realized that the Cold War is over; some indeed almost seem not to have heard that Stalin is dead. This appears to be particularly the case among some elderly Russians in South America and also a few in Australia. This is not the case in Western Europe and many parts of North America, where there are large numbers of new Russian immigrants.

A decade ago, from 1992 until 1997, for example, I was priest of a whole new parish in Lisbon, Portugal, which considered only of such immigrants. Today, possibly a majority of our parishioners in Western Europe were actually baptized in the MP. No-one in ROCOR ever had the absurd thought of 'rebaptizing' them. Today, there are more and more clergy in ROCOR outside Russia (let alone inside Russia) who were born and raised inside what was the Soviet Union. Many of these were ordained inside the MP; yet nobody at any time ever suggested that they should be 'reordained', thus 'receiving grace', in order to be able to serve in ROCOR.

In recent years, ROCOR faithful have been able to frequent contemporary Russian Orthodox in the new immigration. Also, many staunch ROCOR faithful,

once very sceptical about the MP, have in the last few years been able to visit Russia, seen some of the 20,000 new churches, the 600 new monasteries and convents, and met many of the faithful clergy and laity of the MP. They are now pressing for the restoration of eucharistic communion and concelebration.

However, it is also true, that all of us have grave concerns about the directions taken by post-Soviet Russia and wonder what exactly the word 'post-Soviet' means. Some have drawn attention to the recent celebrations in Moscow of the 60th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, with all its Soviet nostalgia, or the fact that Lenin's corpse is still on display outside the Moscow Kremlin, the towers of which are still topped by red stars. Others consider that although post-Soviet Russia may not be Communist-controlled, it does seem to be Mafia-controlled. Alcoholism and abortion continue to wreak havoc and corrupt and criminal gangs appear to run large sections of the economy.

However, are we then saying that the MP, which represents only the practising minority of contemporary Russians, is responsible for these misdeeds? Can we really blame the organization most persecuted of all by Communism, for the current traumas which result from 75 years of Communist ideology and the godless way of life it imposed? And are we also saying that here in the West everything is wonderful, that there is no political Mafia in power, no corruption, no abortions, no epidemics, no drug-taking, AIDS and crime? What have we got to be so proud of? What influence have we had in Christianizing Western societies? Why do we expect so much of others and yet so little of ourselves?

By all means, let us be aware and illusion-free about post-Soviet Russia, where Orthodoxy is reviving after the Communist Golgotha. But let us be equally aware and illusion-free about the fundamentally atheistic nature of modern Western life, where Orthodoxy is declining after the Capitalist Golgotha. It is no good comparing the West of the 1950s with contemporary Russia. Let us rather compare today's West with today's Russia. Just like Communism itself, the present wave of exploitation, materialism, pornography, sexual perversion and moral decadence which has flooded into Russia in recent years, was born in the West, not in Russia. The sin of Russians is to have accepted the decadence that the West has generated. The sin of the West is to have generated such anti-Christian ideologies and decadent lifestyles at all.

3. ILLUSIONS ABOUT OURSELVES

Finally, there is another thread to the arguments against eucharistic communion with the MP, which also distorts reality. This is the tendency, sometimes very marked, to judge without compassion. We all know the stories (quite true ones, and some of them quite recent) about how senior bishops of the MP told flagrant lies. Even at the beginning of the 1990s there was at least one (since departed this life) who was still denying that there had ever been any persecution of the Church by Communism. How are we to judge these individuals?

First of all, we have to realize that those bishops were hostages. We may judge people who tell lies severely. We may say, if I had a gun in my back, and had to tell a lie, I would refuse, and be martyred for the glory of the Church. However, in the Soviet Union, this was not the case. The guns were in the backs of other bishops, in the backs of bishops' brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, in the backs of the wives of priests of bishops' dioceses, in the backs of priests' children. And the bishops were not even being asked to renounce the Faith; they were being asked to tell political lies.

We may have the faith of St Sophia and urge our children on to martyrdom. Or we may not. Who of us has the courage to sacrifice our children and the children of others? Some of us, perhaps. But we do not have the right to condemn others for lacking that courage. The only person we have the right to condemn for lacking courage is ourselves. And we were not even in the Soviet Union, to be put to the test. To tell a lie to a foreign journalist, without actually renouncing the Faith, or to see a dozen parishes, sacramental centres, closed, and thousands deprived of liturgical life? That was the dilemma. Which is the lesser evil? I do not know, and I refuse to judge.

To fall into judgementalism on such questions is very swiftly to fall into sectarian condemnation, censoriousness, phariseeism. The Prayer of St Ephraim tells us not to judge our brothers. Nowhere do the Gospel, the Apostles or the Fathers tell us to condemn others. Rather they tell us to condemn ourselves and be indulgent towards others. And this brings me to the most disturbing element in the present arguments of those opposed to the restoration of eucharistic communion and concelebration between ROCOR and the MP. This is *the persistent and even determined refusal of some to recognize the possibility of repentance and forgiveness*, which are at the very heart of the Orthodox Christian Faith.

Yes, we have all read about Patriarch Alexis past. Yes, we all know his past KGB code-name ('klichka'). But suppose his very clear statements of regret and repentance since then are sincere? Suppose he is, in fact, a man who only ever did what he did because he believed it was for the good of the Church? Certainly, we may believe that he was mistaken. However, we may also believe that he too now thinks that he was mistaken. After all, we all make mistakes. And, as it is written: *to err is human, but to forgive is divine.*

So far, in all the arguments of those opposed to the restoration of eucharistic communion, I have read only political and secular arguments, taken from history, Bolshevik or post-Bolshevik, but I have never heard any protestors utter the words 'forgiveness' or 'repentance'. Yes, in the past, the MP did this and this and this. And our bishops, and we too, in political freedom, condemned the errors of those times, and rightly so. We condemned the sins, but we never condemned the sinners, leaving them to God's judgement. So why then should we condemn them now, when they have the possibility of repentance, when, indeed, they have uttered words of repentance? Forget your political ideologies: open your hearts!

AFTERWORD

We in ROCOR have suffered immensely. In history we have suffered from the persecution of the Communist Party in Moscow, which operated through the KGB agents, some of them in the MP. We have suffered from the pressure they applied (successfully) to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and most Eastern European and Middle Eastern Orthodox Churches to isolate us. We have suffered from the slanders of masonic modernists, ecumenists and elderly 'Neo-Renovationists' (a term of Patriarch Alexis himself), especially in Paris and New York.

But we have also suffered from our own errors. The ever-memorable Archbishop Seraphim of Western Europe (+ 2003) always used to say that although we made mistakes, we always made them sincerely, thinking that we were acting for the best. Nevertheless, mistakes occurred. We only have to think of how members of our Church put St John of Shanghai on trial. It was not the MP or the Renovationist jurisdictions who put him on trial: we did it ourselves. And so many of our clergy and faithful, exiled to distant parts of the world, have suffered down the decades through mistakes. We have suffered unjust accusations, persecutions, slanders; our lives have been disrupted, in worldly terms, even ruined and wasted.

Today, we have an opportunity, not to give up suffering, because the Cross of suffering will of course be our lot until the end of the world, which, according to some, may not be very far off. Rather, we have an opportunity to forgive, and so give up needless suffering, and instead suffer for real causes.

Thus, the whole world is now speeding towards global unity. That unity is not based on the unity of the Gospel, but on the unity of godless secularism. Muslims fight against it with terrorist violence and murderous fanaticism. We do not do that, because we are Orthodox Christians. However, one thing is certain. This is, that if Orthodox are not united, we will not be able to make our voice heard in opposition to this New Babylon, which is now bearing down on us. And he who speaks of the need for Orthodox unity is obliged to start with the unity of Orthodox Russia, for Russia is the key to the Orthodox world and civilization, the bulwark against which the West stumbles.

It is, we believe, the destiny of Russian Orthodoxy to counter the pseudo-unity of modern secularism, in favour of the unity of the common Orthodox Faith. We will not achieve this, if we fall into the trap of internal squabbling which is exactly what Babylon wants us to do. At the present time, all the powers of hell have been let loose, so that Russian Orthodox unity may not come about. Let us not fall into the wiles of the demons. The Russian Orthodox Church Inside Russia has known some three generations of Martyrdom (Muchenichestvo). The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia has known some three generations of Confessordom (Ispovednichestvo). Is it not time to combine forces?

Priest Andrew Phillips

29 September/12 October 2005

PARISH LIFE: SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & LENTEN BOOKLET

A schedule of services for March and April is now available in church on the website. As was promised in the last newsletter, Father James has compiled a booklet that briefly explains the beautiful Lenten services to be served in our parish and their significance. It also includes a background to Great Lent, suggestions for further reading, and information about confession and Holy Communion, two important things to be thinking about and preparing for during Great Lent. Copies of the booklet are also available in church and on the website.

PARISH LIFE: RUSSIAN SCHOOL NEWS

Our parish "Russian School" recommenced classes on Saturday March 12th. This year, school starts at 9.00am and finishes at 12.00pm. The school day will begin with prayers in church (9.00-9:15). Russian language subjects include listening and speaking, speech development, reading, art and craft, drama, and history. Writing will predominantly be a subject for the older children. Father James is to teach 'Law of God' to the older and younger children every week first thing, 30 minutes for each class. 15 minutes of this is a short explanation or talk on a specific topic; 15 minutes is general Q&A. Children (and adults!) not attending the Russian language classes are welcome to attend this part of the school programme. School in 2006 will generally be more informal: activities rather than lessons. Parents interested in enrolling their children should speak with either Father James or the teacher, Irina Kouznetsov (4329-0046). Details of school fees and other information are available on the parish website.

With the resumption of Russian School, the church is once again **open on Saturday mornings** for those wishing to drop by. Following prayers at 9.00am before the commencement of school, Father James takes 'Law of God' classes in the church between 9:15 and 10:15, but both he and the church are generally free after that. The church will also be open from 5.00pm on the Saturday evenings in Great Lent that there is a service in Gosford. This is to allow time before the beginning of the evening service for those wishing to confess.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council met most recently on Tuesday March 14th, 2006. The council heard the usual reports concerning correspondence, finances, parish and sisterhood activities, and building issues. A lively discussion in the second half of the meeting was focussed on the future of the parish, which such questions as the priority of mortgage payments, the length of our stay at West Gosford, and the building or purchase of a permanent church receiving consideration. It once again became clear that the Parish Council needs to develop a long-term "strategic" plan to address these questions. Such a plan would guide the Parish Council in the administration of parish affairs, particularly in relation to financial decisions. Father James is to make arrangements for the Parish Council to meet to focus particularly on a parish plan, with a view to having the plan ready for

endorsement by the 2006 parish Annual General Meeting. The Parish Council is due to meet next on April 4th, 2006.

CHURCH LIFE: NEW FORMAT SYNOD WEBSITE

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia now has a new format to its' website. This is a well-maintained and informative site, and one that the faithful are encouraged to check on a regular basis. It includes church news from around the world, snapshots from church life, sermons, article, official documents, and other items of interest. The web address is www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws.

CHURCH LIFE: LENTEN DESERT COOKBOOK IN PREPARATION

Vicki Kadnikov from Brisbane is coordinating the compilation of a book of recipes for Lenten cakes, sweets, and desserts. The proceeds of sales of this cookbook are to assist the convent of the Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple in Bungarby (in SE NSW). Those with recipes to contribute can email Vicki at nkadnikov@optusnet.com.au or write to her at 1/20 McIlwraith Street MOFFAT BEACH QLD 4551.

PARISH LIFE: IN BRIEF

On Sunday March 19th, parishioner and chorister Katya Rubbo flies to Moscow with Archbishop Hilarion's blessing to study iconography at a month-long workshop. Katya is a talented artist who has some experience with iconography, and this study period will give her a particular opportunity to develop her skills. Father James visited Katya and her family at home recently to serve a moleben for the success of her trip and a speedy return. A brief story and some photos are on the parish website. ~ As of Sunday March 19th, God willing, Reader George Karmadonoff will be taking on the regular role of reading the epistle in Church Slavonic. Many parishioners are unaware that George was tonsured a reader in Jerusalem in 1990 by Metropolitan (then Archbishop) Laurus. We welcome George to his new role in parish life, and pray that God will help him in service of the Church.

PARISH LIFE: LENTEN BBQ ON SYNDAY APRIL 2ND

On Sunday April 2nd there will be a Lenten BBQ for parishioners and friends. The organisers of the fishing competition are providing the main item on the menu, a large quantity of prawns to be BBQed. Drinks, bread and salads will be available. The cost per person will be \$5.00. All are encouraged to attend, as it is hoped that a photo of all parishioners can be taken on the day.

READING: TWO NEW ISSUES OF "THE VOICE"

Available in church from mid-March after a short publishing delay are the January and February issues of "The Voice", a quality English-language Orthodox publication that incorporates the official Diocesan journal. The January edition has information about Orthodoxy in Indonesia; an article about the "Port Arthur" Icon of the Mother of God; and a profitable article about the best use of time. The February edition continues the Indonesian theme with an article about the recent visit to Indonesia of Archbishop Hilarion and Deacon Christopher Henderson. Also included in the February issue is Archbishop Hilarion's article "On the forthcoming All-Diaspora Council" («О предстоящем Всезарубежном Соборе»).

COMMUNITY LIFE: "BRINGING UP BILINGUAL CHILDREN" : A WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS

On Friday March 31st Dr Liz Ellis, a lecturer in linguistics at the University of New England in Armidale, will be conducting a workshop for parents of bilingual children. The workshop will be at the Banksia Centre in Sir Joseph Banks Drive, Bateau Bay, and will run from 9.30am until 12.30pm. There is lots of evidence to support the academic, social and emotional benefits for children of speaking more than one language, especially if it is well-supported at home and at school. The focus will be on constructively supporting bilingualism whilst maintaining levels of English necessary for success at school. There will be plenty of discussion, questions and exchange of information. To register or obtain further information contact Deb Tipper on 4353-4688 or Geri Gray on 4388-2044. The workshop is an initiative of the Benevolent Society.

REQUESTS FROM RUSSIA FOR PRAYERS AND ASSISTANCE

From time to time our parish receives email requests for assistance from people overseas who have seen our website. Below are two recent requests. It can be very difficult to discern the veracity of internet appeals for assistance, and caution is often the best policy. These appeals are nevertheless presented here for prayerful consideration.

Dear Sir,

Ksusha is a six-year girl from Saint Petersburg, Russia. She has a very severe, hard-to-cure disease - aplastic anaemia. Since December 13th, 2005, the girl has been confined to the blood cancer chemotherapy department of the Children's City Hospital № 1 (Saint Petersburg). She is in the isolation ward together with her mother. Ksusha cannot leave the ward as the slightest infection will lead to sepsis and death. Her bone marrow does not function and she can only survive on transfusions of blood components.

<http://ksuha.org/indexE.html>

Help please!

With the best regards
Dr. Dmitriy Afonin
<http://ksuha.org>
medinform@yandex.ru

The website has photographs, medical documentation, and details of proposed treatment abroad.

Дорогие православные братья и сестры во Христе!

Прошу Ваших святых молитв о здравии рабов Божьих: Сергии, Глебе и болящем Викторе. Вот уже более пяти лет все в наших судьбах идет наперекосяк: большие трудности в работе и, как следствие - безденежье, а теперь еще все перешло и на семью - разваливается семья и со здоровьем близких не лады. И чем дальше, тем становится хуже и хуже. Стремимся во чтоб это ни стало быть оптимистами, но сердце кровью обливается когда дети просят есть и НИЧЕМ НЕ МОЖЕШЬ ПОМОЧЬ: НИ СЕБЕ, НИ ИМ!!!

Храни, Господи, Вас и Ваш Святой Храм!

Раб Божий Глеб
glebn@pochta.ru

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Metropolitan Vitaly, our parishioner Antonina (Tialshinsky), Vladimir, Vladimir, Vasili, Nina, Vera, Daniel, Eugenia, Daniel. Prayers are also asked for the health of Father Tony Stace, a Roman Catholic priest from Forster who has greatly assisted the Orthodox mission there.

Expectant mothers: Helena, Tamara

Newly-departed: Nadezhda, Nadezhda, Galina (Rick Golovin's mother, who passed away on 30/1/2006); Norman, Beverly

Various needs: Archpriest Peter and family; Priest Peter and family; all those involved in the organization of the 4th All-Diaspora Council and in discussions with the Moscow Patriarchate; George & family; Katherine, David, Timothy and family, Paraskeva, Antonina, Nicholas & family



4/7 Comserv Close
West Gosford NSW 2250

PO Box 3356
Erina NSW 2250

info@gosfordrussianchurch.org
www.gosfordrussianchurch.org

Our parish newsletter will be 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).