

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEANUP ON SATURDAY MARCH 24th

The Parish Council has decided that Saturday March 24th will be a general clean-up day at church. This will be the usual major clean-up, with everything in the church and hall being washed, scrubbed and polished in preparation for our Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter services. Given the fact that we had a thorough clean-up just before Christmas the task will not be quite as big as it usually is, but many hands will nevertheless 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 useful to do. A light Lenten lunch will be served afterwards for all those working. It is noted that March 24th is the date of the NSW election.

PARISH LIFE: HOLY MYSTERY OF ANOINTING WITH OIL («СОБОРОВАНИЕ») ON THURSDAY MARCH 22ND

On the evening of Thursday March 22nd at 6.00pm we will have the special service of anointing («соборование»). Archbishop Hilarion will be with us for this service. The Holy Mystery of Anointing with Oil for the healing of sickness is referred to in the Bible by Saint James, the Brother of the Lord. He says, "If you are sick, ask the priests to come and pray for you. Ask them to put olive oil on you in the name of the Lord". Ideally, seven priests together perform this mystery, but it can be done by less, and even by one priest alone. In the service of Anointing with oil there are seven epistle readings (readings from the "Letters" in the New Testament) and seven readings from the Holy Gospel. The priests pray that God will bless the oil (which is usually mixed with wine) and that it will be for the healing of the soul and body of the person to be anointed. There are also prayers for the forgiveness of sins, the ultimate cause of all sickness. The sick person is then anointed on the forehead, nostrils, cheeks, lips, chest, and both sides of the hands. During Great Lent, it is the practice of the Russian Orthodox Church to have a service of general anointing in which everyone comes to be anointed for the healing of spiritual and physical sickness. This is an important part of the preparation for the celebration of Pascha. Some church writers say that this Holy Mystery in part absolves us from those sins that we have forgotten or are unaware of. The service will take between 2 and 3 hours. All are encouraged to attend.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council met on Tuesday March 6th. Matters discussed include arrangements for palms and pussy-willow branches for Palm Sunday; arrangements for the church clean-up on March 24th; the proceeds of the fishing competition (\$2301.50); the amount collected for Orthodox Action - Melbourne and for the Holy Trinity Seminary on March 4th (\$305.00); the scheduling of the general anointing service; the amount now owed on the mortgage (\$54250.00 of the \$127000 originally borrowed); the possibility of a church book and icon store; and arrangements for a Lenten BBQ to be held on Sunday March 18th. With regard to the fishing competition, Paul Pereboeff and Victor Bendevski reported that Craig Koppman had provided valuable assistance with organization on the day, something that the Council noted with gratitude. Father James reported on progress in purchasing software to assist with parish administration and inventory. He noted that an accurate inventory of parish property was important not only for insurance purposes, but also to avoid misunderstanding about the ownership of items within the church. The Parish Council is due to meet next on Tuesday April 10th, the first Tuesday after Easter.

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

Reverend Fathers, Dear in the Lord Brothers, Sisters and Children:

I send my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the arrival of the salvific period of Great Lent, the time designated for our inner self-examination. The Holy Church summons us towards this, that we purify ourselves with augmented prayers and fasting, that we illumine ourselves with the reading of spiritually-beneficial books and approach our God and Creator, our Heavenly Father and Closest Friend, Who invites us into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Love, Peace, Mercy and Light.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). And also: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

So, dear in the Lord fathers, brothers, sisters and children, in order that our prayers, labours of fasting and repentance be pleasing to God and that they gain for us the absolution of sins and the renewal of our inner strength, we must be at peace with our neighbour.

In fact, how could our prayers, fasting and repentance be a pure sacrifice before God if they emerge from hearts that are filled with hatred against others? We must read the Lord's Prayer often: "Our Father... forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors." By keeping enmity within our hearts, how dare we utter these words of the Lord's Prayer? Would not our prayer then remain a hollow sound? Would we not be lying brazenly before God? We often hear the exclamation during divine services: "In peace let us pray to the Lord; Peace be unto to all." These words demand of us that we approach prayer having first made peace with everyone, so that we stand before God without anger or malice. Or, when the Holy Church prepares us for the worthy participation in the Divine Liturgy, she also reminds us of reconciliation and love as necessities for our fruitful communion with God and each other in the Mystery of Communion. "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." In the ancient Church, in witness to this mutual love, Christians who prayed during Divine Liturgy kissed one another; now this is performed only by the priests within the altar, while all others, as they hear this exclamation, must establish love and peace for all within their souls. How dare we, fathers, brothers and sisters, perform or pray during Divine Liturgy with hostility in our hearts, and approach Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior, Who, as He was crucified, prayed for His enemies? We will truly enter into communion with God only when we expel from our hearts wrath and wickedness.

St Anastasius of Sinai recounted the story of one monk who led his life in sloth and disregard for monastic rules, who during his final moments felt special spiritual joy. The other monks were amazed at this and asked him what brings him such joy. The dying monk responded thusly: "I watched as the holy angels shredded the lists of my sins, for though I lived carelessly and slothfully, I never condemned anyone, never remembered the evils of others."

And so, reverend fathers, brothers, sisters and children, as we remember the testament of our Saviour, the call of the Holy Church, and as we immerse ourselves in the spiritually-beneficent Lenten time by taking the example of the Holy Fathers, let us strive especially to prevent enmity, hatred and anger amongst ourselves, and instead let peace, love, trust and other Christian virtues eternally abide among us. Let us try in our earthly lives to fulfill in deed the instructions of Apostle Paul to the Christians: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger" (Ephesians 4:26), "Do your best to live at peace with evryone" (Romans 12:18), "Don't let evil defeat you, but defeat evil with good" (Romans 12:21), and may the Lord help us in these holy days.

Once again I greet you all with the Great Lent and prayerfully wish every one of you reconciliation with God in His image, which is reflected in our neighbours. Let the purified heart of each one of us become the Life-Bearing Tabernacle from which the Resurrected Lord will shine forth. Let everyone see in our eyes and in our lives this

Triumph of Christ over evil, over sin and over everything horrible in this world. Greeting the Pascha of Christ in this way will be the finest way to preach the truth of Orthodoxy. In this bright state, I hope, we shall approach the canonical actions which will serve to the reestablishment this year of peace and unity within the Local Russian Orthodox Church.

May this be within the souls of each one of us. Amen.

With love in the Lord, I beseech your prayers,

+ Metropolitan Laurus,

First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

ВЕЛИКОПОСТНОЕ ПОСЛАНИЕ ВЫСОКОПРЕОСВЯЩЕННЕЙШЕГО МИТРОПОЛИТА ЛАВРА, ПЕРВОИЕРАРХА РУССКОЙ ЗАРУБЕЖНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ

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

Сердечно приветствую всех вас с наступлением спасительного времени Великого поста, предназначенного для проверки своей жизни и работы над своим внутренним человеком. Святая Церковь ныне нас призывает к тому, чтобы очиститься сугубой молитвой и постом, просветиться чтением душеполезных книг и приблизиться к нашему Богу и Творцу, нашему Небесному Отцу и Лучшему Другу, Который приглашает нас в Свое Царство, Царство Любви, Мира, Милости и Света.

Господь наш Иисус Христос говорит: «Если будете прощать людям согрешения их, то простит и вам Отец Ваш Небесный; а если не будете прощать людям согрешения их, то и Отец ваш не простит вам согрешений ваших» (Мф. 6, 14-15). И еще: «Если ты принесешь дар твой к жертвеннику и там вспомнишь, что брат твой имеет что-нибудь против тебя, оставь там дар твой пред жертвенником и пойдя прежде примиришься с братом твоим, и тогда приди принеси дар твой» (Мф. 5, 23-24).

Так, дорогие о Господе отцы, братие, сестры и дети, чтобы наши молитвы, подвиги поста и покаяния были угодны Богу и доставили нам оставление грехов и обновление наших внутренних сил, мы должны быть в мире со всеми ближними своими.

В самом деле, как могут наши молитвы, пост и покаяние быть чистой жертвой перед Богом, когда они будут исходить из сердца, исполненного злобы против других? Мы должны часто читать молитву Господню: «Отче наш!.. остави нам долги наша, якоже и мы оставляем должником нашим». Имея вражду в сердце своем, как мы осмелимся произносить эти слова молитвы Господней? Не будет ли наша молитва одним бесплодным звуком? Не будем ли мы дерзко лгать перед Богом? Мы часто также слышим при богослужении возгласы: «Миром Господу помолимся,

мир всем». Эти возгласы требуют от нас того, чтобы мы приступали к молитве примиренными со всеми, чтобы мы стояли перед Богом без гнева и вражды. Или, когда Святая Церковь готовит нас к достойному участию в Божественной литургии, то она также напоминает нам о примирении и любви, как о необходимых условиях благотворного общения нашего с Богом и друг со другом в Таинстве Причащения. «Возлюбим друг друга, да единомыслием исповеваем Отца и Сына и Святаго Духа». В древней Церкви, во свидетельство такой взаимной любви, христиане, молившиеся при совершении Божественной литургии, лобызали друг друга; теперь это исполняется только между священниками в алтаре, все же прочие, слыша это возглашение, должны в душе своей водворить любовь и мир со всеми. Как же мы дерзаем, отцы, братие и сестры, с враждой в сердце совершать Божественную литургию или молиться при ее совершении и приступать к приобщению Тела и Крови Христа Спасителя, Который, будучи распинаем, молился за Своих врагов? Мы по-настоящему вступим в общение с Богом только тогда, когда мы изгоним из своего сердца злобу и лукавство.

Преподобный Анастасий Синаит рассказывал, что один монах, проводивший свою жизнь в лености и несоблюдении правил монашеской жизни, при последних минутах своей земной жизни был в особенно радостном настроении. Другие монахи удивлялись этому и спрашивали, что его радует. Умиравший отвечал им так: «видел я, как святые ангелы разодрали рукописание моих грехов за то, что я, хотя и жил в беспечности и лености, но никого не осуждал, ни на ком не помнил зла».

Итак, всечестные отцы, братие, сестры и дети, помня заповедь Спасителя, внушения Святой Церкви и углубляясь во время душеполезного времени поста в примеры святоотеческой жизни, будем особенно стараться, чтобы не укоренялись между нами вражда, ненависть и злоба, но чтобы между нами царствовали всегда мир, любовь, доверие и прочие христианские добродетели. Постараемся в нашей жизни на деле исполнить наставления апостола Павла христианам: «да не зайдет солнце во гнев наш» (Еф. 4, 26), «будем, сколько возможно, со всеми человеки мир имети» (Рим. 12, 18), «не дадим себя победить злу, но победим зло добром» (Рим. 12, 21), в чем да поможет всем нам Господь в эти святые дни.

Снова поздравляю всех с Великим постом и молитвенно желаю всем примирения с Богом и образом Его, который отражается в наших ближних. Пусть очищенное сердце каждого из нас станет Живоносным Гробом, в котором воссияет Воскресший Господь. Пусть все увидят в наших глазах и в нашей жизни вот эту Христову Победу над злом, грехом и всем тем, что земля создала страшного. Таковая встреча Пасхи Христовой станет наилучшей проповедью истинности Православия. В таком светлом состоянии, надеюсь, мы и приступим к тем каноническим деяниям, которые послужат восстановлению в этом году мира и единства в Поместной Русской Православной Церкви.

Да будет это в каждом из нас, для всех нас. Аминь.

С любовью о Господе и просьбой о молитвах,

+ Митрополит Лавр,

Первоиерарх Русской Зарубежной Церкви.

6/19 февраля 2007 г.

PARISH LIFE: THREE YEARS AT WEST GOSFORD

The services on March 31st and April 1st for Palm Sunday will mark the third anniversary of services here at West Gosford. The first services in our new church were for Palm Sunday 2004: the vigil on Saturday April 3rd and Divine Liturgy Sunday April 4th. In those three years our parish has grown and prospered, and we have as a community much to give thanks to God for. We pray that He will continue to bless us in the years ahead.

SPIRITUAL LIFE: CONFESSION AND COMMUNION DURING GREAT LENT

All parishioners are encouraged to confess and receive Holy Communion at least once during Great Lent. In this parish, those who confess and receive Holy Communion on the weekend of March 31st-April 1st (Palm Sunday) will generally be permitted to also receive communion on Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday. It is possible to confess on Saturday nights when we have a service at Gosford, on Sunday mornings before Divine Liturgy, or at other times by arrangement with Father James. Those parishioners who confess to another priest should let Father James know before coming to Holy Communion so as to avoid any misunderstanding.

READING IN CHURCH ON GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY

Each year on Great and Holy Saturday there are at Divine Liturgy 15 Old Testament readings before the usual Epistle and Gospel. Although two of these fifteen readings are usually read by an experienced chorister who sings them in part, the others are shared amongst the faithful wishing to assist. Last year a number of people took a turn at reading, some in English, some in Slavonic, and one in Greek. The same opportunity will be available this year. Those wishing to assist should speak with Matushka Marie, who will be co-ordinating readers for this service.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PASCHA (EASTER SUNDAY)

As Pascha falls this year on a Newcastle Sunday, Father James will serve the midnight Divine Liturgy there, with Paschal Matins to be served at Gosford earlier in the evening. On the feast of Pascha itself, Vespers has been scheduled for 6.00pm. Paschal Vespers is a short yet beautiful service, entirely sung, and one at which all the joy of Pascha is felt. Some parishes, such as Croydon, have begun to serve Paschal Vespers much earlier in the day - at around 11.00am - so as to allow people to visit family and friends for the

remainder of the day without the need to journey back to church. If any Gosford parishioners are interested in such an arrangement, it is certainly possible to move our Vespers to an earlier time, and to follow it with a festive parish breakfast. Those interested should let Father James know. Father James plans to travel around the parish later that day visiting those unable to make it to the services, or simply continuing their celebrations at home with family and friends.

DIOCESAN PUBLICATIONS

The March 2007 issue of the Russian-language Diocesan journal, «Церковное Слово» ("Word of the Church"), is now available. It includes Metropolitan Laurus' Lenten Epistle; the text of a lecture on work with youth given by Archpriest Gabriel Makarov at last year's All-Diaspora Council; a report on the 41st Diocesan youth conference held in Adelaide last December; photographs of recent ordinations and tonsures; details of a pilgrimage to Russia in July this year, to be led by Archpriest Nikita Chemodakov; and various "ukazi" or official directives concerning Diocesan life. One such directive of note concerns the appointment of Priest Alexander Korjenevski to the Blacktown parish; Father Alexander is now entrusted with the care of both Carlton and Blacktown parishes. May God help Father Alexander in his pastoral labours, responsibilities that he exercises in addition to full-time civil employment.

The Diocese has also published a collection of documents in both Russian and English entitled "The truth about the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR) and the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP)". Although some of these documents have been published on the internet and in the church press before now, this booklet is a useful compendium of informative materials. Copies will be available in Church this month.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

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

Expectant mothers: Alison (non-Orthodox)

Preparing for reception into the Orthodox Church: Christopher

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraiuhin), Theodore (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina)

SPIRITUAL LIFE: WWW.ANCIENTFAITHRADIO.COM

An interesting feature of the internet is web-based radio channels that allow for listeners to tune in from anywhere in the world. One such station of particular relevance to us is "Ancient Faith Radio". Based in the US, it has prayers, church music in Russian, English and Greek, talks and discussion, news, downloadable MP3 files and

podcasts, and lots more. It is possible to have the station playing in the background as one works at a computer or attends to other things about the house. It is certainly worth having a look at!



OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

On Wednesday March 15th 21 priests and deacons gathered at Strathfield from around the diocese, together with Vladyka Hilarion, for the annual Great Lenten Pastoral Conference. The solemn and beautiful Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (served only on certain weekdays during Great Lent, and so rarely seen by many) was served in the morning, and after lunch the clergy discussed questions of pastoral importance. The gathering was a positive one, conducted in a warm fraternal spirit. ✨ Fr Michael Protopopov, the author of 'A Russian Presence: A History of the Russian Orthodox Church in Australia' reminded participants at the pastoral conference that 2007 was the 200th anniversary of a Russian presence in Australia, and briefly discussed plans for activities to mark the anniversary. The Parish Council will give some thought to marking this anniversary locally. ✨ May 13th-19th this year is National Families Week. The week encompasses Mothers' Day on Sunday May 13th and International Day of the Family on Tuesday May 15th. Our Great Feast of Ascension falls this year on Thursday May 17th. The theme of National Families Week this year is 'FITT: Families Investing in Time Together'. This too is something that we will give thought to observing in parish life. ✨ Father James is working on some pastoral booklets explaining the prayers and services associated with the birth of a child, and those associated with the departure of a soul. It is hoped that the booklet on birth can be circulated in local hospitals, helping with pastoral outreach to young Orthodox Christian families in the parish.



4/7 Comserv Close
West Gosford NSW 2250

PO Box 3356
Erina NSW 2250

www.gosfordrussianchurch.org.au

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).