

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

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

~ Number 4, 22 September 2002 ~

CHURCH LIFE: THE FEASTS OF THE NATIVITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD AND THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS



Yesterday, September 21st (September 8th on the Church calendar), the Church celebrated the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God (Рождество Пресвятой Владычицы нашей Богородицы и Приснодевы Марии). This feast is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of our Church.

Holy Tradition tells us that the parents of the Holy Virgin were called Joachim and Anna. They were very good people who gave lots of money to the poor. They loved each other very much. Joachim came from the family of King David, so he was of royal lineage. Anna came from a family of priests. They were very old and although they had been married for 50 years, they had no children. Because of this, they were very sad and ashamed. In those days, having no children was thought of as a terrible thing, a punishment from God.

One day a sad and terrible thing happened. Joachim had travelled all the way to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice to God in the temple. The High Priest was very rude to Joachim and said, "You are not worthy to offer sacrifice with those childless hands". Other men, who had been blessed with children, all pushed Joachim out of the way.

At home, Anna looked out of the window and saw a mother bird in a nest with her babies. She was sad, seeing that even the birds had babies, while she had none. When Joachim came home again, he and Anna were both so sad that they cried.

And yet they didn't despair, but turned to God with faith. They prayed and prayed with many tears that God would give them a child. They remembered how He had given a baby to Abraham and Sarah when they were very old. They promised that they would dedicate the baby, if God gave them one, to His service. Almighty God heard their prayers. He sent an angel to tell them that they would have a baby. Because that baby - Mary, the Mother of God - would herself later have the most special baby of all - our Lord Jesus Christ - Saints Joachim and Anna are called a special name: the "Ancestors of God".

New Year's Day on the Church Calendar is September 1st (September 14th on the civil calendar). Because of this, the first Great Feast of the Church year is the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God.

This reminds us that the birth of the Holy Virgin Mary was the first step in the unfolding of God's plan to save us from sin and death.

This coming Friday, September 27th (September 14th on the Church calendar), we will celebrate the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord (Воздвижение честного и животворящего Креста Господня). This is another of the Twelve Great Feasts of our Holy Orthodox Church. It is different from all the other feasts because it is the only one on which we do not celebrate events in the earthly lives of our Lord Jesus Christ or His all-holy Mother.

This feast is a commemoration of two things that happened to the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. The first is the finding by Saint Helena of the Cross on Golgotha, and the second is the return of the Cross to Jerusalem.

Saint Constantine the Great was a Roman Emperor who became a Christian and stopped the killing of Christians by the Roman authorities. His mother, Empress Helena, was also a Christian. In the year 326AD she went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and paid for many churches to be built on the sites of various holy places connected with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. While she was there, she decided to look for the Cross on which Christ had been crucified.

When Saint Helena arrived in Jerusalem, she found that the places where our Lord had suffered and was buried were underneath a pagan temple. She found this out from an old Jew, who was the only one to remember. Saint Helena ordered that this temple be destroyed. Digging beneath the temple ruins, she found three crosses, but did not know which one was the Holy Cross. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Makary, suggested that they take the crosses to a sick woman. When they touched her with the first two crosses, nothing happened, but when they touched her with the third cross, she suddenly became well!

Just then, a funeral procession passed by. They touched the third cross to the dead man, and he was suddenly restored to life! Because of these two miracles, Saint Helena knew that the third cross was the Holy Cross of Christ. The Patriarch then lifted up ("exalted") the Cross so that everyone could see it. They all bowed down before it and thanked God. The old Jew who had shown Empress Helena where the crosses were became a Christian, and was later made Patriarch of Jerusalem. His name was Kyriakos, and he was later martyred.

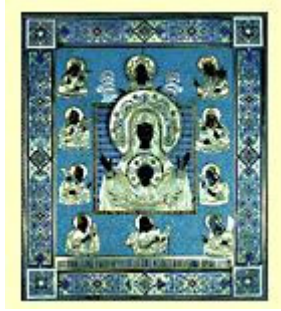
The Holy Cross was kept in a special church built on the place of Christ's resurrection from the dead: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It stayed there until 614AD when a Persian king captured it and took it away to his own country. The Persians kept the Cross for 14 years until the Greeks fought them and took it back. Emperor Heraclius, the Greek Orthodox emperor, carried the Cross into Jerusalem on his own back.

On the way, something unusual happened. Emperor Heraclius was carrying the Cross in his royal robes. Suddenly, he couldn't move any further! Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel telling the Emperor to take off his robes and walk with the Cross just as Christ had, barefoot and humble. The Emperor did this, and was able to carry the Cross all the way into the Church.

Even though this is one of the Great Feasts, we keep a fast on this day, in remembrance of the Cross.

At the end of the all-night vigil service, the priest brings a cross into the middle of the Church. We all bow down before it 3 times, singing "Кресту Твоему, покланяемся Владико, и Святое Воскресение Твое славим". In English, this is: "Before Thy Cross, we bow down and worship Thee, O Master, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify".

PARISH LIFE: KURSK-ROOT ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD VISITS GOSFORD



On Monday September 2, our community was pleased to welcome the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God to the Central Coast. Father James & Father Christopher brought the icon from Sydney in the afternoon, firstly visiting the Avoca Beach home of Katya Rubbo, one of our parishioners who has been quite unwell, and serving a moleben for her health. They then went a short distance to the home of Rick & Nina Golovin. There, Hieromonk John from Newcastle and around 40 of the faithful gathered for a moleben and akathist in Slavonic & English. All venerated the icon and most stayed for a 'cup of tea' afterwards. Many thanks to the Golovins for their hospitality, & to all who helped. Father James returned to the coast on Tuesday September 3, visiting a number of homes with the icon. This was a wonderful event in the life of our growing church community, a great blessing and a consolation.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick: Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Alypy, Priest Boris, George, Tatiana, Ekaterina, Olga

Expectant mothers: Manefa, Victoria, Amy (Orthodox); Ethel (non-Orthodox)

Special needs: Priest Serafim, Irene, Subdeacon Mark & family, David, Katherine, Constantine, Tatiana, Christine (Orthodox); George & Natalie & their new baby, Judy & family (non-Orthodox)

Preparing for marriage: Matthew & Irene (to be married on 4/10), Peter & Svetlana

Newly-married: Paul & Ksenia (married on 8/9)

Note: The "Olga" mentioned amongst the sick is our choir-mistress, Olga Ivanovna Itisikson, who is at home recovering after nearly a fortnight in hospital. Parishioners will remember that Olga Ivanovna was feeling poorly at our last service. She was admitted to Concord Hospital the next day with circulation problems in her legs. Vladika Hilarion & Father James were both able to visit her there, Vladika giving her some holy oil from the lampada at the relics of Saint John of Shanghai & San Francisco. Although feeling much better, Olga Ivanovna was unfortunately unable to make it for today's service.

GOSFORD SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

22 September	Sunday	Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Mother of God; Sts Joachim and Anna <i>Divine Liturgy</i>	9.00 am
13 October	Sunday	16 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>Divine Liturgy</i>	9.00 am

OTHER IMPORTANT CHURCH DATES

Exaltation/Воздвижение is a Great Feast, & in most churches services will be held at 6.00pm on the eve of the feast and at 9.00am on the feast itself. Try & make it to church for this feast if you can!

27 September	ВОЗДВИЖЕНИЕ КРЕСТА ГОСПОДНЯ День постный, разрешение на вино и елей, но без рыбы. Exaltation of the Cross (A fast day: wine & oil allowed, but not fish).
14 October	ПОКРОВЪ ПРЕСВЯТЫЯ БОГОРОДИЦЫ Holy Protection of the Mother of God Престольный праздник в Кабраматте Parish feast-day at Cabramatta

This year, Vladika Hilarion will be serving in Cabramatta on the feast day. The Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God will also be present. Vigil will be served at 6.00pm on Sunday 13/10. On 14/10, the day of the feast itself, there will be a lesser blessing of water at 8.00am and Divine Liturgy at 9.00am, followed by a moleben & procession. All are welcome to attend the service & the festive lunch provided afterwards.

CORRECTION & APOLOGY

In the last issue of Пантелеимонский Листок it was stated that Nina Golovin was our head sister. Nina has pointed out that she is not the head sister but the treasurer (казначей), and that Irene Krikunov is the head sister. Apologies to all concerned!

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