

# ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

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

~ Number 29, 4 July 2004 ~

## Saint John, the Wonderworker of Shanghai & San Francisco

Today we mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the glorification of Saint John of Shanghai & San Francisco, the pride and joy of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. He served as a bishop in our Church up until the mid 1960's. Many people in our parishes still remember him. His incorrupt body is kept in a special shrine in our cathedral in San Francisco, a church in which he himself served.

Saint John was born in Russia in 1896. His mother and father named him Michael. He was a good child and worked hard at school. He studied law, which he finished in 1918. He was a lawyer for a little while, but had to leave Russia because of the revolution. His family went to Serbia (Yugoslavia) with many other Russians. He began to study theology, and in 1926 was tonsured a monk with the name John. He was then ordained deacon and later priest.

Saint John taught in the seminary in Serbia. His students loved him very much. They realised that he lived a very holy life, struggling to control himself and do God's will. He fasted strictly, eating only once a day. He would not sleep in a bed, but would pray for long hours, only falling asleep when he couldn't help it. At night he would walk around and bless the students as they lay sleeping. He knew the Holy Gospel from memory, and was patient & kind. He learned to serve in Greek for the Greeks and Macedonians who lived nearby.

In 1934 he was made a bishop & sent to China. He was so humble that he didn't believe he was going to be a bishop - he thought that the other bishops must have made a mistake! In China, he worked very hard for his flock. He sorted out all sorts of problems and was able to get a big new cathedral built in his city, Shanghai. There are quite a few men in our Church who were altar boys with him in the cathedral in Shanghai. He went to church every day and visited all the sick people and prisoners that he could. He would even go late at night and in pouring rain! He set up a home for orphans and looked after children with no families. He served in Chinese as well as Slavonic. His flock loved him dearly.

In the late 1940's the Russians had to leave China because communists were by then taking control of China too. 5000 Russians lived in tents for over 2 years on an island in the Phillipines! Every night, Saint John would walk around the camp and bless it. Although typhoons would often blow over that island, some books say that none came

while Saint John was there, praying for the people. As soon as he and the people left, a big typhoon came and destroyed the whole camp.

In 1951 Saint John was sent to Europe. He lived in France and Belgium. Here, he served in French and Dutch. His first "cathedral" was in an old garage! Many people thought of him as a living saint, & called him "Saint John the Barefoot" because sometimes he didn't wear shoes, having given them to someone who had no shoes. Lots of people who weren't Russian became Orthodox Christians because of the example of Saint John.

In Paris, he wanted to serve a panikhida for King Alexander of Serbia who had been killed in the street by his enemies. Saint John decided to serve the panikhida on the exact place where the king had died, in the middle of the road! Everyone else was too embarrassed to join him, but he didn't care, and took a broom and swept clean a patch of the road. He put his eagle rug down, lit the censer, and started to pray. Everyone stared, but Saint John ignored them - it was more important to him that he pray to God for the repose of King Alexander's soul.

In 1962 Saint John went to America. There, he helped to solve lots of problems and build another church. He served in yet another language, English. He defended the Church calendar and tried to stop people who wanted to change our Orthodox faith. He lived in America for 4 years, until he died in 1966. His body was placed in a special casket in the basement of the church, where people could come and pray. Many miracles and healings happened in the lives of those who prayed for Saint John and to him.

In 1993 all the bishops of our Church decided that Saint John's remains should be examined. Archbishop Anthony of blessed memory and others who opened the casket found that Saint John's body was almost without decay, and that his skin was still white. At their next meeting, the bishops decided to glorify Saint John as a saint.

In general, our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad remembers Saint John on the Saturday closest to the day that he died (June 19<sup>th</sup>, or June 2<sup>nd</sup> on the Church calendar). Because a service on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> was not possible in Gosford, we are commemorating Saint John on the closest Sunday.

Saint John was a wonderful vladika, and truly a good shepherd. He defended the Church from enemies, he struggled hard to be a good Christian, he looked after all his flock, he taught and protected young people, he worked miracles and healed people, and he spread the faith like an apostle.

*Holy Hierarch John, Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, pray to God for us!*

## **PARISH COUNCIL NEWS**

The Parish Council held its' July meeting last Thursday, July 1<sup>st</sup>. Meetings are generally once a month, on the first Thursday of each month, unless circumstances require a

change. Amongst other things, the Council heard a report about the charitable work that Katya Rubbo and her husband are involved in, assisting orphans in Russia, and considered the possibility of the parish sponsoring a family that cares for orphaned children. It was agreed to take up a special collection to assist her work. The Council also discussed a range of other issues including: aspects of parish life; paying bills; the completion of work in the kitchen and upstairs storeroom; the purchase of altar wine; the issue of 'Certificates of Appreciation' to those involved in the building and adornment of the new church, including those businesses that donated materials; ongoing plans for a parish Russian School to begin in 2005; assisting the 2004 Russian Orthodox Youth Conference; the inclusion of prayers for rain in the services, and the possibility of serving the full 'Service of Supplication in Time of Drought'; and developments in church life internationally.

### **PARISH LIFE: A BAPTISM**

On Sunday June 27<sup>th</sup> Father James baptised Nicholas & Alexander, the sons of Ivan Telyatnikov and his wife Maria, of Narara. God willing, the boys will receive Holy Communion for the first time today. Please remember the newly-baptised servants of God Nicholas & Alexander in your prayers, together with their parents, and also their godparents: Elena, Dietmar, Ksenia, & Sergei.

### **PARISH LIFE: SOME OBSERVATIONS**

Parish life is now very much in a phase of consolidation as we settle into the routine of being a "regular" parish. Church attendance has been very healthy lately, with a number of new faces and many visitors from Sydney. The schedule of services for the coming months (see below) is somewhat expanded; plans for a Russian School are well underway (a survey for parents is to be developed this week); fabric for a set of red church vestments has been purchased; and the parish sisterhood is strengthening under Olga Petroff's able guidance. We should not forget to give thanks to God for all these things.

### **CHURCH LIFE: 2004 RUSSIAN ORTHODOX YOUTH CONFERENCE**

This year's Diocesan youth conference, or "syezd", the 40<sup>th</sup>, is to be held for the first time in the national capital, Canberra. Youth from our Canberra parish of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist are organizing it, and Archbishop Hilarion has recently appealed to all pastors and parishes to assist as best they can. Our Parish Council has accordingly approved a donation from the parish. Parishioners should also note the posters in the hall advertising a fundraising Russian Ball in Canberra on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. At last year's syezd, held in Sydney, two of our young parishioners - Alex Yakimov and Nicholas Krikunov - attended, and Father James gave a lecture. Although most of our parish children are still many years away from attending syezd, it is hoped that we will be able to put up a good show again this year. Watch this newsletter or the Diocesan website for further information.

## FUNDRAISING RAFFLE

Head Sister Olga Petroff has organized a fundraising raffle, or "guessing competition", as we should say, to be drawn on Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup>, the date on which Vladika Hilarion will be visiting us to celebrate our feast day of Saint Panteleimon. There are 12 beautiful prizes, all in keeping with a Russian theme: a pair of Russian bears "Masha & Vanya", with balalaika; a Russian Boyaryshnia doll; a balalaika; a bottle of vodka with 2 goblets; a shawl; an Aeroflot souvenir; a scarf; a basket of wine; a wooden bowl & spoon; a painting; and a Siberian Tiger balsamic drink. Special tickets have been printed, which means that the tickets are suitable for sale at work and to friends outside the parish, as well as on the feast-day. Tickets are \$2.00 each and available in books of 10, and all parishioners are encouraged to take one. If every parishioner takes and sells a book of 10, that is about 600 tickets already! Please talk to Olga, or call her on 4342-4241, should you be able to help.

## GOSFORD SERVICES

After today, we have only 2 more services in July: vigil and liturgy for Saint Sergius of Radonezh on July 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, and an akathist before the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God on Tuesday July 20<sup>th</sup>. A new schedule of services is under preparation, and will be posted or emailed to all parishioners in the coming week. It will be also be available in church at the next service. Covering the period from August to December, it includes services for Saint Seraphim of Sarov on August 1<sup>st</sup>; Saint Panteleimon on August 9<sup>th</sup>, together with Vladika's visit on August 15<sup>th</sup>; services for the Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on September 27<sup>th</sup>; a service in honour of the Optina Elders on October 23<sup>rd</sup>; and akathists to Blessed Xenia, Saint John of Kronstadt, and Saint Ioasaph of Belgorod on their feast-days. It should also be noted that the Saturday evening services will for a time generally be Matins (Утренняя) rather than the customary All-night Vigil (Всенощное бдение). Very much a temporary move - given that it means missing the beautiful stichera sung at Vespers - this is a change that will lighten the load on our singers and readers as they endeavour to master the evening services. Our beautiful Russian Orthodox services are one of our greatest spiritual treasures and supports; please do not neglect them!

Father James tries (often unsuccessfully, lately!) to prepare this newsletter to coincide with each service at Gosford. You can call him about it on 0428-639156 or email him at [rev.james.carles@rocor.org.au](mailto:rev.james.carles@rocor.org.au).