

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

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

~ Number 34, 17 October 2004 ~

2004 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Общее Годовое Собрание Прихожан

Please note that our parish Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Sunday November 7th, following Divine Liturgy. The Annual General Meeting hears reports from the outgoing parish council and elects the parish council for the year to come. The agenda is included with this newsletter, and will be sent out with associated documents to all parish members in the coming week. Only financial parish members are entitled to vote at the AGM.

PARISH LIFE: SUCCESSFUL OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND BBQ

On Monday October 4th, the Monday of the October long weekend, approximately 115 parishioners and friends (71 adults and 44 children) gathered in J F Heazlett Park, Avoca Beach, for a parish BBQ. Organised by George Karmadonoff, Victor Bendeovski, and Paul Pereboeff, the day was a great success, and gave us all an opportunity to relax and socialise in what is a very beautiful location. There was plenty to eat and drink, bright sunshine all day, paddleboats on the lagoon for those energetic enough, and the opportunity to play cricket and touch football. Although it was not primarily a fundraiser, \$852.00 was raised. George, Victor & Paul are once again to be congratulated on their efforts. We hope that there will be more gatherings of this kind in the years ahead. Some photographs should be on the website soon: www.gosfordrussianchurch.org

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The last Parish Council meeting was held on 5.10.2004. In attendance were Father James, Starosta Alexander Yakimov, Head Sister Olga Petroff, Treasurer Nina Golovin, Secretary Katya Marcotrigiano, and council members Bill Reid, Rick Golovin, George Fomin and Don Kobeleff. Apologies were received from Katya Rubbo. Items discussed included:

- The usual review of the financial position of the parish;
- Progress made in preparing the parish accounts for the auditing committee, and the usefulness in this regard of the computer accounting program MYOB ("Mind Your Own Business"). After some discussion, the parish Council agreed

- to purchase a laptop computer for the parish, allowing the Treasurer to keep records that can more easily be prepared for reporting each month and year;
- Arrangements for carrying out a stocktake of candles, and properly recording candle sales. This is necessary as parishes are asked to pay the church authorities a percentage of any profit on candle sales;
- A brief review of the October long weekend BBQ at Avoca;
- The necessary preparation for the Annual General Meeting;
- The celebration on 7.11.2004 of 20 years of Vladika Hilarion's episcopate, which unfortunately coincides with the AGM. It was agreed that a congratulatory card would be sent to Vladika, with both the Parish Council and the Sisterhood contributing to a gift;
- The possibility of obtaining a number of plots in the Point Clare cemetery. Father Fames is to further discuss this with Gosford Council; and
- A number of minor items.

In the course of the meeting, Alexander Yakimov unexpectedly submitted in writing his resignation from the position of starosta. Pending the AGM and a decision about the filling of this position, the starosta's duties will be attended to on an informal roster basis.

Given the later date for the AGM, the Parish Council will meet next on 2.11.2004. This will be the final meeting of the current Parish Council.

THE HOLY ELDERS OF OPTINA MONASTERY

Треподобныхъ Оптинскихъ Старцевъ

One of the most famous monasteries in Russia before the revolution was the "Optina" Monastery of the Mother of God. A man who had once been a robber, Opta, was sorry for his all his sins, and started this monastery over 500 years ago. He went to live in the forest to pray to God and cry over the wicked things that he had done. Slowly, other people came to live with him and a church was built.

Attached to this monastery was a small community or "skete" dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Many holy monks lived in the monastery and skete. Between 1828 and 1928, 14 holy fathers lived there who are now great saints in our Church: the Holy Elders of Optina Monastery. Their names are Leo, Makarius, Ambrose, Moses, Antony, Hilarion, Issac the first, Anatoly the elder, Joseph, Barsonuphius, Anatole the younger, Nektary, Isaac the second, & Nikon.

Saint Moses was the first one to go to Optina. He took with him his younger brother, Antony. He was in charge of the monastery, and in doing this job he was wise and kind. He gave each monk a special job to do. He invited Leonid and Makarius to join them. These two monks were also very wise and kind, and every night taught the monks how to be good Christians. Other monks learned from them, and soon the monastery became famous for its wise spiritual teachers or "elders". The monastery published many books to help people learn how to pray and live good Christian lives.

People came from all over Russia to talk to them. Rich and poor, men and women, nobles and peasants, healthy and sick: all received kind words and wise teaching from the holy elders of Optina.

Probably the most famous of the elders was Elder Ambrose. He was the first of the Optina elders that the Russian Orthodox Church officially recognized as a saint. He began to live at Optina in 1839 when he was still a young man. Guided at first by Elder Leonid and then by Elder Makarius who chose him as his cell-attendant (or helper), he quickly advanced in spiritual life. After only three years he became a monk and in another three years he was ordained priest. Sickness forced him to rest away from people for several years, a time in which he prayed as much as he could. Although he was sick for the rest of his life, he worked very hard, at first helping Elder Makarius to translate the writings of the Holy Fathers, to write letters and to give advice to pilgrims. He then became an Elder himself.

For 30 years after Elder Makarius's death, Elder Ambrose was Optina's main elder. Many, many people came to see him, and even when he was totally exhausted and had to receive them lying in bed, he never turned away anyone in need of advice or help. He was able to see what was in a man's heart, and could often see into the future. He always taught each person exactly what was needed and no one's problem was considered too unimportant.

The great Russian writer Dostoevsky thought of Elder Ambrose as a perfect Christian. Elder Nektary called him "an earthly angel and a heavenly man."

In 1918 the wicked communists who had taken over Russia closed the monastery and its churches. They put many of the monks into prison, including Saint Jonah, an Optina monk who later became bishop of Hankow in China. The communists turned the monastery into a museum in 1923. During the 1930's, many of the monks were sent to cold Siberia to work in hard labour camps, and many were

tortured and shot. The communists killed Elder Nikon in 1931. The last Optina elder, Elder Isaac the second, was shot on December 26, 1938. The communists destroyed the graves of the elders who had been buried at Optina, pouring a big slab of cement over the top of them all, and building a shed on top of it.

In 1987 Optina Monastery was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church. In time, the graves of the Holy Elders were uncovered, and their bodies were placed with great honour in one of the monastery's churches.

Here is a prayer known as the "Prayer of the Optina Elders". It is a very beautiful and helpful prayer to say at the beginning of each day.

Give me the ability, O Lord, to face with peace of mind all that this new day is to bring. Give me the desire and the ability to do all that You want me to. For every hour of this day, teach and help me in all things. Whatever news I may receive during the day, teach me to accept it calmly, in the firm belief that all things happen according to your plan. Control my thoughts and feelings in all I do and say. When things happen that I do not expect, let me not forget that all things come down from You. Teach me to behave honestly and sensibly toward every member of my family, that I may bring confusion and sadness to none. Give me, my Lord, strength to endure the tiredness of the day, and to do my part in all its passing events. Guide my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to suffer, to forgive, and to love. Amen.

The Church remembers the Holy Optina Elders every year on October 23rd (October 10th on the Church calendar). This year, we will have services in Gosford on Friday October 22nd (Matins at 6.00pm) and Saturday October 23rd (Divine Liturgy at 8.00am, followed by a moleben) to commemorate them.

NEW PARISH WEBSITE

Currently under construction, although nearly finished, is a new website for our parish:

www.gosfordrussianchurch.org

Designed by a friend of our parish, Olga Lusina, it is an attractive website with news, photos, information about the parish, service schedules and copies of this bulletin. Please have a look at it and let Olga (dobah@optusnet.com.au) or Father James (rev.james.carles@gosfordrussianchurch.org) know of any thoughts or suggestions that you may have. Once the Russian version has been completed, we hope to have an official "launch" of the new website.