

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church, Gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 54, April 2006 ~

GREETINGS ON THE HOLY DAYS AHEAD

Father James and the Parish Council wish all parishioners and friends of our parish a blessed observance of Holy Week and a joyous celebration of the saving Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

PARISH LIFE: LENTEN SERVICES, NEW SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

As we write, the season of Great Lent is drawing to a close. We were fortunate to have had a great many Lenten services in Gosford this year. The Sunday morning services were well-attended - particularly Palm Sunday, when approximately 40 people received Holy Communion - and a number of the faithful also came to the lesser services, especially the service of anointing on the evening of the Fifth Sunday in Great Lent (a brief account of this service and some photographs are available on the parish website). Although one struggles with self-discipline in the time of the fast, the beautiful Lenten services are a support and a consolation. Reflecting constantly on the Holy Scriptures, the service materials consistently point to God's mercy and his love for mankind, repeatedly inviting us to draw closer to Him. As the years go by, may the Divine Services of our Holy Orthodox Church serve exactly that purpose: our drawing ever closer to God.

A Winter 2006 schedule of services will be available in church from April 20th and on the website shortly afterwards. Covering the months from May to August inclusive, services to note include vigil and Divine Liturgy for the Great Feast of the Ascension of the Lord on May 31st and June 1st; Divine Liturgy in English on July 30th; services for our patronal feast of Saint Panteleimon on August 8th and 9th; Archbishop Hilarion's visit on August 13th; and services for the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God on August 27th and 28th.

PARISH LIFE: BIBLE READING AND DISCUSSION GROUP TO BEGIN IN MAY

In response to a number of needs in parish life, Father James is commencing a twice monthly Bible reading & discussion group in May. The first meetings are scheduled for the second and fourth Tuesdays, May 9th and 23rd respectively. It is expected that these group discussions would run for between one and one-and-a-half hours

(and no longer, if participation is not to become too much of a time burden!), beginning at 7.00pm. Beginning with a prayer, the first half-hour or so will be reading aloud and discussion of the Bible, beginning with Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans. Father James will begin by giving a little bit of background to the book being read and discussed. The group will work through one book of the Bible before starting another. The idea is to develop a habit of Bible reading and to simply become more familiar with the Holy Scriptures. Those attending need not bring Bibles; Father James will obtain Bibles in an easy-to-understand translation and standard format that participants can use. The second half-hour or so will be a general discussion and question-and-answer session on all aspects of Orthodox Christian life. Some topics already noted for discussion include confession, frequency of Holy Communion, preparation for Holy Communion, prayers at home, icons in the church, various contemporary issues, and more. There will be some snacks and tea and coffee available (perhaps pizza can be ordered, from time to time...). The first two meetings will be at the church hall; if there is interest, the venue can be changed to Father James and Matushka Marie's home at Umina Beach. A home venue makes family participation more of a possibility, as there is extra room and plenty of toys for any children (indeed, it may even be possible to have some separate activities for children). Please consider making time for what is hoped will be a step forward in the life of the parish and in our individual spiritual lives.

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEAN-UP HELD ON APRIL 14th

On Friday April 14th (a Public Holiday because of Catholic & Protestant Good Friday) a number of parishioners - about 15 in all - met at church in order to give things a good cleaning in preparation for Palm Sunday & Pascha. As usual, all the furniture was removed and polished; the oil lamps were cleaned, polished and filled; the icons were dusted and cleaned; the floors were scrubbed; the green vestments were ironed and set out in church; and in general, everything was set in order. The church looked beautiful for the Palm Sunday services on April 15th and 16th. Many thanks to all who were able to help out on the day.

PARISH LIFE: TWO YEARS AT WEST GOSFORD

This month marks the second anniversary of services 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 two years we have seen our parish firmly established in a way that was not possible at Narara Community Centre, with pleasing developments in all areas of parish life. May God grant that our parish continues to blossom and grow.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council met most recently on Tuesday April 4th, 2006. Unfortunately, a number of members were unable to be present because of sickness or prior commitments. The council heard the usual reports concerning correspondence, finances, parish and sisterhood activities, and building issues. Father James presented some considerations to the members present on the subject of strategic planning. He covered three areas: parish activities, parish finances and parish governance. The parish activities discussed were those set out in the Normal Parish By-Laws and reported against in the parish Annual Report: prayers and sacraments, the church building and its' needs, educational work, support of the clergy and church authorities, and the provision of help to others in need. It was observed that prayers and sacraments are a strength in parish life; that the church building is at present adequate and is well cared for; appropriate support for the clergy and church authorities is provided; and that education and charitable work are at present weak areas. Parish finances need careful review and information must be compiled to support decision-making with regard to either expansion at West Gosford (an upstairs floor, for example) or purchase of land with a view to construction of a church. Parish governance - continuing in sound decision-making and accounting practices, ensuring compliance with the law in relation to privacy and other such legislation - remains an important aspect of parish life. These considerations were noted, and will form part of the Parish Council's ongoing discussion of the direction of parish life. The Parish Council is due to meet next on Tuesday May 2nd.

PARISH LIFE: LENTEN BBQ ON SUNDAY APRIL 2ND

As mentioned in the March newsletter, on Sunday April 2nd there was a Lenten BBQ for parishioners and friends. The organisers of the fishing competition provided a large quantity of prawns to be BBQed. Many people stayed after church to enjoy the good food and company. So successful was the event that the Parish Council has decided to make it an annual event. A photo-report will shortly be posted on the parish website.

READING: NEW ISSUE OF «ЦЕРКОВНОЕ СЛОВО»

Available in church from late April is the Russian-language Diocesan journal, «Церковное Слово». The April 2006 issue is dedicated primarily to material relating to the forthcoming 4th All-Diaspora Council, now only a few short weeks away. Included are an article by Archbishop Hilarion, an interview with Archbishop Mark, articles by prominent Archpriests Peter Perekrestov and Victor Potapov. Archbishop Hilarion Paschal Epistle is also included, as are Paschal greetings from

parishes and Diocesan institutions. Copies are available from the candle-desk; the cost is \$2.00 each.

THE PARISH WEBSITE; A NEW FEATURE TO BE ADDED

Many people - both parishioners and friends - have remarked on our website, and on how interesting it is to have regular updates on parish activities, together with photographs. Primary thanks are due to Olga and Dimitri Lusim of Quakers Hill in Sydney, friends of the parish who have generously designed and maintained the website as a way of helping parish life.

Over the next couple of weeks a new feature will be added to the regular news stories: "Parishioner Profiles". Matushka Marie and Sarah Carles will be interviewing and photographing parishioners for a more personal look at parish life. Who people are, how they came to be at our church, their role in church life, arrival or growing up in Australia, and so on: these sorts of things will be discussed. The idea with this is that we learn a bit more about each other, and that others learn a bit more about the rich diversity of our parish life. Participation is of course entirely voluntary!

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Metropolitan Vitaly, our parishioner Antonina (Tialshinsky), 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

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



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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).