

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church, Gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 52, February 2006 ~

PARISH LIFE: 2006 SO FAR

So far, 2006 has been a lively period in parish life. We have had services for the Great Feasts of the Nativity, Theophany, and Meeting of the Lord in addition to the regular services; parish homes were blessed on and soon after Theophany; three young children have been baptised; a BBQ has been held in honour of our hardworking ladies' committee; Divine Liturgy was served in English late in January; and our third annual fishing competition has been held. More information about some of these activities can be found elsewhere in this newsletter and also on the parish website, which has the added benefit of photographs. Parish life has been enriched over the summer months by visitors and holidaymakers from Sydney, and also in the longer term by some new regular worshippers. We now look forward to a wedding later this month and to our third Great Lent and Pascha in the West Gosford church. In all these things we see the life of the Church - the body of Christ - becoming ever more significant in individual lives. May God grant that His Holy Orthodox Church is always a haven and a support to each one of us!

PARISH LIFE: THREE BAPTISMS

It has been mentioned above that there have been three baptisms already this year. Received into the Holy Orthodox Church on January 28th were brothers Elijah (aged 11) and Jacob (aged 4) Milojkovic. Of Serbian and Australian heritage, Elijah and Jacob were sponsored at baptism by elder brother Zakarij and paternal aunt Jasmina. The boys were both in church the following day, radiantly attired in their baptismal robes to receive Holy Communion for the first time.

On February 4th, Eleanore Nina Williams, the infant daughter of Andrew Williams and Nina Romantsova, was baptised. Born 10 weeks premature, baby Eleanore Nina was not officially due until February 5th! Her sponsors were Natalia Dolotina and Steven Ross.

To the newly-enlightened servants of God Elijah, Jacob, and Eleanore Nina, and to their parents and godparents, we offer congratulations. May God grant them many years!

PARISH LIFE: THHIRD ANNUAL FISHING COMPETITION

As planned, the parish's second annual fishing competition was held over the weekend of 11th and 12th February. Organised by Paul Pereboeff, Victor Bendeovski and Gerorge Karmadonoff, the competition was once again a success, with 47 people participating. The event was held at Deerubbin Reserve, Bar Point, on the Hawkesbury River. Many of the competitors brought boats, and others fished off the shore at the reserve. The gathering was friendly and everyone enjoyed the beautiful weather. Those staying overnight on the Saturday enjoyed the camp atmosphere. The funds raised will once again be directed towards the reduction of our mortgage. The overall winner was Tony Celeste with a very large jewfish. The competition scales only went up to 25kg and these were not enough to measure the fish. Tony has since had the fish professionally weighed in at 27kg (the biggest fish last year was > 2 kilos!). Tony's name will be put on the perpetual trophy and he also received a trophy to take home. The prizewinners were as follows:

Bream

Andrei Yakimov 0.41kg

Flathead

Paul Morozoff 1.20kg

Kingfish

Alex Yakimov 1.90kg

Jewfish

Tony Celeste 27kg

Two Fish Combo

George Pereboeff: Hairtail 5kg & Bream 0.38kg

Other Fish

George Pereboeff: Hairtail 5kg

Prizes were donated by Otto's Fishy Business, Baits R' Us, Alec Pereboeff & Sam Shatrov. Otto from Otto's Fishy Business attended the Sunday lunch and was impressed by the fish caught over the weekend and the good spirit of the competitors. Many thanks to the organizers, sponsors and competitors for making this fundraising event so enjoyable and successful.

PARISH LIFE: NEW SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

A new schedule of services will be available in church from February 19th and on the website shortly after. Covering the months of March and April, it includes all the services that we will have during Great Lent and Easter week. Once again, we have a service of some kind on every weekend of Great Lent, and at least one in the course

of each week. We will have services on Palm Sunday again this year; a general service of anointing («соборование») late in Lent; and the services of the Twelve Gospels and Lamentations before the tomb during Holy Week. Father James is working on a booklet that briefly explains the beautiful Lenten services and their significance, and this should be available in church and on the website in early March. In a time of increased spiritual effort such as Great Lent, it is important to have a corresponding increase in spiritual support and consolation. This is precisely what we have in the Lenten services, and all parishioners are encouraged to plan March and April in such a way as to benefit from the common prayer of the Church. The services of Great Compline (scheduled for most Wednesday evenings during Lent) and Vespers with the Passia (scheduled on the first four Sunday evenings) are services of particular solemnity and beauty, very much setting the tone for Great Lent as a whole. Great Compline is a service that involves a lot of reading of psalms and prayers, and all who attend will be welcome to participate.

Father James has made a change to the way that he schedules Easter services between this parish and the parish in Wallsend. Up until now, the approach has simply been to serve midnight Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy in each parish on alternate years. If Easter falls on a regular Sunday for the parish concerned, this arrangement is unproblematic. If it falls on a Sunday usually assigned to the other parish, however, problems can arise. Last year, for example, Gosford missed out on Palm Sunday, the midnight Easter service, and Thomas Sunday (the first Sunday after Pascha). If we were to have the midnight service in Gosford this year, Newcastle would miss out on Palm Sunday, the midnight Easter service, and both the first and second Sundays after Pascha, a period of four Sundays in a row without a service! To avoid this and to ensure that both parishes are adequately served at this important time of year, the midnight Easter service will now be served in whichever parish there would usually be a Sunday service on that particular weekend. Over a ten-year period it balances out much the same, in any case. Father James is happy to explain the details to anyone who might be interested!

PARISH LIFE: AN ICON DONATED...

A regular worshipper at our parish over the past few years has been Michael Galovic, a well-known Serbian iconographer who lives here on the Central Coast. Many will recall Michael's gift to the parish - back in the days when we held services at the Narara Community Centre - of an icon of Saint Panteleimon. This icon now has pride of place in the icon corner in our church hall. Michael has recently presented another icon to the parish - a large icon of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor of our Lord Jesus Christ. This beautiful icon will in time hang in the altar at West

Gosford. The Parish Council was most appreciative of Michael's generous gift, and a letter of thanks is to be prepared. A brief news-report about Father James' visit to Michael's home for the celebration of his "slava" of Saint Sava of Serbia and the presentation of the icon is available on the website. The news-report includes photographs and a link to Michael's website for those interested in his work.

...AND SOME PAINTINGS ON LOAN

In January the parish also received on loan three paintings of the martyred Grand-Duchesses of Russia Olga, Tatiana & Anastasia. Painted in 2001, they are the work of Mariko Ralph, a young woman from Bateau Bay (on the Central Coast) who was then studying for her HSC. Having developed an interest in the martyred Grand Duchesses, Mariko contacted a number of Russian Orthodox parishes for further information and assistance in what became her HSC art project. It was in this way that she came into contact with Father James, who was at that time a deacon at Saint Nicholas, Fairfield. They have remained in contact since, and Mariko recently offered three of the four paintings on a "permanent loan" to the parish. Father James accepted the offer, and is now making arrangements to have the paintings properly framed before hanging them in the church hall. The portrait of Grand Duchess Olga is particularly beautiful, and incorporates a great deal of material of spiritual significance, including prayers that she composed. In due course, photographs of the paintings will be placed on the parish website.

PARISH LIFE: RUSSIAN SCHOOL NEWS

Our parish Russian school has yet to recommence this year, with the school committee (of teacher and parents) agreeing to give children the chance to settle back into regular school before adding Saturday-morning Russian school. At that stage, it is planned that school will recommence before the end of February. Parents interested in enrolling their children should speak with either Father James or the teacher, Irina Kouznetsov (4329-0046). Details of school hours and fees are available on the parish website.

PARISH LIFE: CHANGES TO THE PARISH WEBSITE

From mid-January, the website has had a new look on the home page. The new format includes a list of news items - sometimes accompanied by a photograph - that link to more detailed stories and photo-reports. The result is that the site is much more interesting and provides a real insight into the life of the parish and what actually happens at a day-to-day level. This is very important; many parish websites provide lots of academic or theoretical information about Orthodoxy, lots of rules

and regulations, but ours aims to give more of a sense of what actually goes on in a specific Orthodox Christian parish - of what Orthodox Christian life is really like. By doing this, we can assist other Orthodox Christians wanting to visit or learn about the life of our parish; non-Orthodox wanting to know something about the practicalities of Orthodox Christian life, as opposed to the theory available elsewhere; and provide something of a "log" of our parish experience. This last point should not be underestimated. We have accomplished something quite important here in establishing the first new Russian Orthodox parish in Australia in many years, and in taking an imaginative approach to our temporary church and parish centre. We are also trying to do so a number of other important things: form a sound parish administration with good governance; lay the spiritual and material foundations for the future of the parish; and respond appropriately to the needs of a young and diverse congregation. All these things are of interest and encouragement to others. As a number of the website news items are not duplicated in the newsletter, please have a look at the website - all feedback and suggestions are welcome!

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

After a long break over the summer months, the Parish Council met on Tuesday January 31st. Various developments in parish life were discussed, with the usual reports being delivered by the office-bearers. A matter of animated discussion was that of clergy payments, always a topic of sensitivity in any parish. Discussion touched on financial priorities at this stage in parish life, the responsibilities of the parish in relation to the work and expenses of the clergy, the impact upon these responsibilities of clergy undertaking secular work, and related issues. The Parish Council sought to put arrangements in place that would on the one hand adequately cover expenses and express the gratitude of the parish, and on the other hand wisely use the available funds. These arrangements remain a work-in-progress, and the Parish Council will continue to carefully monitor this aspect of parish administration. Another matter of discussion was the successful candle-desk roster, whereby (in the absence of an elected Church Warden) a number of the parish men take it in turns to supervise the sale of candles and prosphora in church. This has given many an opportunity for a more active involvement in some of the administrative tasks of the parish. The Parish Council commented on the diligence with which all concerned had undertaken these duties. The next meeting is scheduled for March 14th, 2006.

CHURCH LIFE: KENTLYN CONVENT FUNDRAISING

The Kazan Icon of the Mother of God convent in Kentlyn (Campbelltown) is currently raising funds to cover the cost of important repair work required for some of the

convent buildings. This work includes repair of the cracked cupola on the main church, painting the cupola on the belfry (the small stand-alone structure that houses the convent bells), and re-sheeting the roof on the building housing the old church and convent. The latter building is still used by Hieromonk Joachim's English-language congregation, as well as by clergy and other male visitors, and as a convent storehouse. Approximately \$25000 is needed to undertake this work. With Archbishop Hilarion's blessing, a donation list has been circulated and the convent has asked that a collection be undertaken on their behalf. The list is now at the candle-desk in church, and a collection will be taken up in March. Please support this important work.

ORTHODOX ACTION - SYDNEY FUNDRAISER

Orthodox Action -Sydney (OA) is a charitable organisation that assists the needy in Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union in addition to various projects here and elsewhere in the Russian diaspora. OA raises money in various ways, one of which is charity concerts. Their 5th Anniversary Charity Concert is to be held at the Russian Club (7 Albert Road, Strathfield) at 2.00pm on Sunday February 26th. Entitled "Share a Smile", the concert will feature an entertaining mix of performances including Russian folk and classical items. All who are able to do so are encouraged to attend. Tickets are \$20 (\$16 for pensioners & \$10 for children 5-12). All funds raised will go to help orphaned and abandoned children and the needy in Russia and neighbouring countries.

PARISH LIFE: CHOIR ACTIVITIES AND NEEDS

Our parish choir meets for practice twice each month. These practices now generally take place in church on a weekday between 4.30pm and 6.30pm. Apart from giving regular choir members the opportunity to revise certain items and prepare for upcoming feast-days, there is also a chance for newcomers to learn singing and reading in Church Slavonic and the structure of voices and church services. It would also be of great assistance if someone could help with transport to and from practices of choir members without cars. Those interested or able to help should talk to our choir mistress, Olga Ivanovna Itsikson.

The choir has a range of expenses including liturgical books, music books, stationery, maintenance of the keyboard used during practice, and some transport costs. Although the Parish Council has generally covered such expenses, a raffle has now been organised to raise choir funds. This raffle will be drawn after church on Sunday February 19th. All are encouraged to support the choir in their important work, either by involvement, assistance or in this fundraising activity.

SPIRITUAL LIFE: THE GREAT FEAST OF THE 'MEETING' OF THE LORD

СРЕТЕНИЕ ГОСПОДА НАШЕГО ИИСУСА ХРИСТА

The feast of the Meeting of the Lord ('Сретение') is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of our Church. It is celebrated on February 15th (February 2nd on the Church calendar). On this feast-day we remember something important that happened in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can read about this in the Bible, in the book of the Holy Gospel written by Saint Luke, chapter 2.

The Old Testament law required that every new-born child be brought to the Temple on the 40th day after birth and dedicated to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ also fulfilled this law. When He was 40 days old, His Mother and the Righteous Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him to God.

Two very old and very good people were there: a man called Symeon and a woman called Anna. God had promised Saint Symeon that he would not die until he had seen the Saviour, the special person that God would send to save His people from sin and death. The Holy Tradition of our Church tells us that Saint Symeon was 270 years old. He had once been translating the Old Testament, and had asked God to help him understand what it meant when it said in the book of Isaiah that a Virgin would have a child. God promised Symeon that he would live to see this.

As soon as the baby Jesus was brought into the temple, Saint Symeon and Saint Anna knew that he was the Saviour promised by God. When Saint Symeon saw the baby Jesus, He said, "Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me. With my own eyes I have seen what you have done to save your people, and foreign nations will also see this. Your mighty power is a light for all nations, and it will bring honour to your people Israel" (Luke 2: 29-32).

We read Saint Symeon's prayer in church at every Vespers service, and whenever we say the prayers of thanks after having Holy Communion. In Slavonic, the language that we still generally use in the Russian Orthodox Church, Saint Symeon's prayer is:

«Нѣне отпущаеши раба Твоего, Владико, по глаголу Твоему с миромъ: яко видеста очи мои спасение Твое, еже еси уготовалъ предъ лицемъ всехъ людей, светъ во откровение языковъ, и славу людей Твоихъ Израиля.»

The Mother of God and Joseph were very surprised when they heard Saint Symeon say this. He blessed them and told them that the baby Jesus was a very special child. He said that many people would love Him, but also that many people would hate Him. He told the Mother of God that she would one day suffer greatly over her child.

Saint Anna was 84 years old. She had once been married, but her husband had died after only 7 years. Now she lived in the temple and prayed and fasted day and night. She spoke to everyone and told them all how special a child Jesus was.

Christians have celebrated this feast-day for many hundreds of years, especially in Jerusalem. All Orthodox Christians have celebrated it since the year 542 AD, when the good Christian emperor Justinian the Great decided that it should be celebrated everywhere as a special feast. He decided this because he wanted to thank God for saving the capital city, Constantinople, from a terrible plague.

"Сретение" is an old Slavonic word that means "meeting". This feast-day is called the "meeting" of the Lord because of the meeting of baby Jesus and His Mother with Saints Symeon and Anna.

Something significant that happens in church on this day is the blessing of candles and fruit. The blessing of candles is an old practice, and helps to remind us that our Lord Jesus Christ is "a light for all nations", just as Saint Symeon said. The blessing of fruit on this day - using the prayers for the blessing of fruit appointed for the feast of the Transfiguration - has become customary in many of the Australian parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church. The offering of seasonal fruits to God in thanksgiving for his blessing upon us is also in keeping with the events celebrated on this feast.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Metropolitan Vitaly, our parishioner Antonina (Tialshinsky), Vladimir, Vladimir, Nadezhda, Nadezhda, Vasili, Nina, Vera, Daniel, Eugenia. 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

Preparing for marriage: Reader Luke and Elise

Newly-baptised: Elijah, Jacob, Eleanore Nina

Newly-departed: Galina (Rick Golovin's mother, who passed away on 30/1/2006); Norman

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



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