

THE APPROACHING FEASTS OF THE NATIVITY AND THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Father James and the Parish Council extend to all members and friends of our parish greetings and best wishes on the approaching feasts of the Nativity and the Baptism of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. May He richly bless you in this festive season and in the year to come!

Festive Services:

6 January 2007 (Christmas Eve): Confession from 4.30pm, followed by All-night Vigil (Great Compline and Matins) commencing at 6.00pm

7 January 2007 (Christmas Day): Divine Liturgy commencing at 9.00am, with Great Vespers at 6.00pm

19 January 2007 (Theophany): No service at Gosford

20 January 2007: Blessing of parish homes during the day, followed by Matins at 6.00pm

21 January 2007 (Afterfeast of Theophany): Divine Liturgy commencing at 9.00am, followed by the Great Blessing of Waters and the blessing of parish homes

House blessings on and after the feast of Theophany:

Father James will serve Divine Liturgy at Wallsend on the feast of Theophany, January 19th. In the late afternoon that day, and on Saturday 20th, and again on Sunday 21st after Divine Liturgy, he will be free to bless parish homes. As usual, a list will be available in church for those wishing to indicate their interest in having their home blessed. At this stage, it is likely that homes in the north of the parish (Charmhaven, San Remo, Wyong) will be blessed on Friday; and homes along the coast (Avoca, Copacabana, Bateau Bay) and on the Woy Woy peninsula on Saturday; and homes from Ourimbah to West Gosford and Kariong on Sunday afternoon.

A REGULAR WORSHIPPER AT OUR PARISH PUBLISHES A BOOK

On Thursday December 7th 2007, Central Coast resident, well-known iconographer, and regular visitor to our parish, Michael Galovic, launched a book entitled 'Icons + Art'. A beautifully presented book, it includes Michael's traditional iconography in addition to other works of art with both religious and secular themes. For those interested in purchasing the book, there are leaflets in church with examples of some of the icons and other works of

art. More information is also available on the publisher's website at www.geographicsgroup.com/icons+art. It is a hardcover publication with over 80 coloured plates. The cost of the book is \$80.00, and copies may be ordered directly from Michael, who can be contacted on 0403-042143. Some of Michael's work adorns our church here at West Gosford: the main icon of Saint Panteleimon in the hall, and the icon of the Transfiguration of the Lord that hangs above the choir. Both icons were gifts from Michael to our parish.

CHURCH LIFE: "ON THE JOINT DIVINE SERVICES SCHEDULED FOR MAY 2007 FOR THE SIGNING OF THE ACT OF CANONICAL COMMUNION"

A Statement by the Secretaries of the Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on talks with the Moscow Patriarchate and of the Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate on talks with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on December 8, 2006, and the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate on December 26, 2006, approved the proposals of the Commissions of the Moscow Patriarchate on dialog with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on talks with the Moscow Patriarchate regarding the place, time and rite of the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion, and also the order of divine services connected thereto. These proposals were prepared at a joint session of the two Commissions in Cologne on October 26, 2006.

According to the plan, the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion is scheduled to take place on May 17, 2007. It is expected that on this day, when the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia and the members of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, along with the members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, will gather at Christ the Saviour Cathedral. After a short moleben, the decrees of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate and of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on the confirmation of the Act of Canonical Communion will be read aloud, after which the Act itself will be read.

His Holiness the Patriarch and His Eminence the First Hierarch will sign the Act, greetings will be exchanged and Many Years then sung.

Immediately following the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and the other bishops will conduct Divine Liturgy. During the service, the Royal Doors will be open in the Paschal tradition, and the people of God can fully participate in the joy of the first joint partaking of the Eucharist by the hierarchs and clergymen of the then-united Russian Church.

On May 19, on the feast day of St Job of the Much-suffering and of St Job of Pochaev, which is also the birthday of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy and His

Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, the bishops and clergymen of the Russian Church Abroad will perform Divine Liturgy at Uspensky (Dormition) Cathedral in Moscow's Kremlin.

On May 20, 2007, on the seventh week of Pascha, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy and His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, along with the bishops and clergymen of Russia and from Abroad will perform the consecration of the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in Butovo, and then Divine Liturgy in the newly-consecrated church.

On May 15, 2004, Metropolitan Laurus, during his first official visit to Russia, and the members of His Eminence's delegation, prayed during divine services performed by His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II on Butovo Field, the place where an untold number of martyrs died at the hands of the godless regime, many of whom have been canonized as saints. On that day, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church performed the ceremony of the laying of the foundation of this new church, which is now being prepared for consecration. The First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia also participated in the laying of this foundation.

By the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, the Lord has blessed our path to achieving the holy task of restoring the unity of the Russian Church, which had endured great sorrows in the 20 th century. We believe that through their heavenly intercession, this will be accomplished to the Glory of God and the joy of the people of the Church.

Protopriest Alexander Lebedeff
Los Angeles
December 27, 2006

Protopriest Nikolai Balashov
Moscow

PARISH LIFE: BECOMING A PARISH MEMBER

At the 2006 Annual General Meeting of the parish, a resolution was passed that stated, in part, that all worshippers at West Gosford be encouraged to become financial members of the Parish. The following information explains parish membership and the rights and responsibilities of parish members.

Of whom does a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia legally consist?

A parish of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia legally consists of the clergy appointed by the Ruling Bishop and those of the faithful who become members of the parish.

(Paragraphs 6, 8, 11 of the 'Normal Parish By-Laws', the standard constitution for all ROCOR parishes)

Who can become a member of a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia?

A person may apply to become a parish member if he or she is

- an Orthodox Christian
- at least 21 years of age

- someone who has confessed their sins and received Holy Communion within the previous 12 months
- someone who cares for the moral and material benefit of the parish

(Paragraph 11)

How does a person apply to become a parish member?

A written application must be made to the **parish council** to become a member of the parish. The Parish Council may refuse an application for parish membership.

(Paragraph 12)

In our parish, membership application forms and renewal forms exist. These are available from the Secretary, Kate Marcotrigiano, or from the parish website.

What must parish members do?

Parish members must

- Confess their sins and receive Holy Communion at least once a year
- Pay agreed membership fees if able
- Tend to the moral and economic welfare of the parish
- Remain loyal to the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia
- Remain loyal to their parish and cooperate with the parish priest and Parish Council
- Act in a way that promotes peace and unity within the parish

(Paragraphs 13, 14)

What may parish members do?

Parish members may, after 6 months' membership

- Participate in parish meetings
- Elect parish officials
- Be elected to parish offices

(Paragraph 13, Annotation 1 to Paragraph 13)

What must parish members not do?

Parish members must not

- Obstruct lawfully made decisions of the Parish Council
- Violate good order and decorum in the church
- Engage in ignoble business
- Live in partnership without church marriage
- Commit criminal offences

(Paragraphs 1 and 14, Annotation 2 to paragraph 11)

Can a parish member be deprived of membership or membership rights?

Yes. A parish member may be deprived of membership if he or she

- Obstructs lawfully made decisions of the parish council

- Violates good order and decorum in the church
- Engages in ignoble business
- Lives in partnership without church marriage
- Commits a criminal offence
- Fails to pay the agreed membership fees, unless unable to do so

(Annotation 2 to Paragraph 13, Paragraph 14)

Parish membership is encouraged because it allows those who worship here regularly to better assist in the work of the parish: supporting and helping one another by maintaining a welcoming community in which Orthodox Christian prayers, sacraments, teaching and worthy activity can be found. Members can do this by their involvement in parish decision-making, and by serving, if elected, on the Parish Council.

It is important that all members take seriously their responsibilities, as failure to do so can undermine the validity of decisions in which they are involved. Current or prospective members who feel that certain responsibilities present difficulties (yearly confession and reception of Holy Communion, for example) should discuss their concerns with Father James at the earliest opportunity.

SPIRITUAL LIFE: A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

We are often worried about the actions of those in civil authority and about social problems, and prayer should be the first thought of a Christian when faced with such concerns. The Church has formal prayers for many circumstances and occasions, although - sadly - many of them are now heard only rarely. One such prayer is that of the Church at the commencement of the year, usually read after Divine Liturgy on January 1st on the (Old) Church Calendar, January 14th on the civil calendar. There is no reason why this prayer cannot be read privately at the commencement of the civil New Year, however, and the prayer is printed below in order that the faithful can add it to their morning prayers during the first weeks of January 2007.

O Master, Lord our God, Fountain of life and immortality, the creator of all things both visible and invisible, Who hast appointed seasons and years by Thy power, and dost direct all things by Thy most-wise and all-gracious providence: We thank Thee for Thy compassions which Thou hast poured out upon us during the passing time of our life, and we entreat Thee, O All-compassionate Lord! Bless the crown of the coming year with Thy goodness. Preserve our Queen Elizabeth II and those who rule over us; multiply the days of their life in unalterable health, and grant them progress in every virtue. Grant Thy good things from above unto Thy people: health and salvation, and good hastening in all things. Deliver Thy Holy Church, this city and every city and land from every evil circumstance, granting them peace and tranquillity. And count us worthy that we may always offer thanksgiving unto Thee, the Father Who is without beginning, together with Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thine All-holy and Life-giving Spirit, God glorified in one Essence, and that we may hymn Thy most-holy Name. Amen.

Father James can provide a copy of this prayer in Church Slavonic (in Russian font, if need be) should anyone desire it. Other prayers that can be read at home will be printed and discussed in future newsletters.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 4TH ANNUAL FISHING COMPETITION

It was mentioned in the last newsletter that preparations were underway for our 4th annual fishing competition. Arrangements for the competition have now been made, information leaflets prepared, and letters written to sponsors. The competition will take place on 10th February, and as in previous years will be held at Deerubben Reserve by the Hawkesbury River. The cost will be \$40.00 per adult, \$20.00 for children under 16, and \$80.00 per family (2 adults + kids). Although previous competitions have tended to be "boys only", this one will be more of a family event. Once again, the organisers are Paul Pereboeff (0414-950741) and Victor Bendeovski (0410-327635), and any questions or offers of assistance should be directed to them.

PARISH LIFE: UNDERTAKING CHARITABLE WORK

An important part of Christian life is charitable work, or work undertaken in Christian love to help others less fortunate than ourselves. At a recent Parish Council meeting, the possibility of undertaking some charitable work as a parish was raised by parish councillor Paul Pereboeff. This is an excellent suggestion, and one to which we must certainly give some thought. Two ways in which we might collectively undertake such work are: (i) participating in the work of other, larger, church groups in their charitable, welfare and relief work; and (ii) undertaking small projects of our own, such as preparing food and gift hampers at Christmas and Easter times, or raising money for specific local or community needs like hospital equipment. There are undoubtedly many more possibilities. Parish members and regular worshippers are asked to give prayerful consideration to this matter over the next few weeks. Towards the end of January, Father James will convene a meeting of those interested in order to discuss ideas, form a parish "charitable works committee" and make some plans for 2007. Ideas can be discussed with Father James before then, of course.

LIVES OF SAINTS: HOLY, RIGHTEOUS JULIANA OF LAZAREVO

Трав. Иулиании Лазаревской

When thinking about Christian life, and especially about the challenges we face when preparing to undertake charitable work, it is helpful to consider the lives of other Christians who have gone before us.

Most of the saints that we usually know something about are bishops or kings, martyrs or confessors. But there are also saints who are ordinary people who have simply lived good Christian lives, died a normal death, and then have later been found to be saints. One such saint is the Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo.

Juliana was the daughter of a nobleman. She was born in Moscow in the 1530s. From her childhood, she tried to live a Christian life, fasted strictly and spent a lot of time in prayer.

Her parents died when she was only six, and she was looked after by relatives who did not understand her and who laughed at her. Juliana endured this patiently and without complaining.

She showed her love for people by often sewing clothing for the poor and by looking after the sick. Her good life was especially wonderful as she had no one to teach her. Her relatives did not even go to church very often!

The good Christian life of the young lady attracted the attention of a rich man from the village of Lazarevo, Yuri Osorin, who soon asked to marry her. At their wedding, the priest told them that their house and family should be like a little church. Yuri and Juliana listened to what the priest said to them, and based their home life on their Christian faith.

Juliana had to look after her husband's home and all their servants. The big job of looking after a busy house did not distract Juliana from her effort to be a good Christian. She would always find time for prayer and was constantly ready to feed children whose parents had died, and to clothe the poor. During a severe famine she gave up her own food to poor people who came begging. When disease spread after the famine, Juliana devoted herself wholly to the care of the sick. She also sewed vestments for the church, and secretly gave money to the poor.

Juliana and her husband had thirteen children, six of whom died in childhood. After the loss of two grown-up sons, she wanted to become a nun and live in a monastery, but her husband asked her to stay with him and look after their children. He said to her: "Black clothes (like those a nun wears) will not save us if we don't live as we should; even in white (or ordinary) clothes we can be saved - if we do God's will." By saying this, Yuri explained that the most important thing is not where we live or work, but whether or not we try to live in the way that God wants us to.

Juliana realised that what her husband said was true. She tried even harder to do God's will, going to church every day, praying more, giving more money to the poor, and eating and sleeping less.

After 10 years, Juliana's husband died. Once she had buried him, Juliana distributed her share of the inheritance to the poor. Living in extreme poverty, she was still always happy and friendly, and she thanked the Lord for everything.

Juliana died on January 2, 1603. She was buried next to her husband in the village church of Saint Lazarus. January 2nd (January 16th on the civil calendar) is the date on which we remember Saint Juliana each year.

In the year 1614, Juliana's son died, and he was buried next to his parents. Some people opened Juliana's coffin and found that it was full of a sweet-smelling myrrh, or oil. Her body was just as it had been at the time of her death! Many sick people were made well by rubbing the oil on themselves. In this way, the people learned that Juliana was a saint.

Juliana's life shows us that even ordinary people (like us!) can be saints if we try as hard as we can to do God's will. In our lives - at home, at work, and at school - we can try hard to be

good Christians. By sharing, caring, serving one another, loving, forgiving - things that are not always easy to do! - we too will receive God's blessing. Try this yourselves, not forgetting to ask the Most Holy Mother of God, Saint Juliana, and all the saints, to help you with their holy prayers.

SPIRITUAL LIFE: RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

We receive Holy Communion because our Lord Jesus Christ said: "I tell you for certain that you won't live unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. But if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have eternal life, and I will raise you to life on the last day. My flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you are one with me, and I am one with you." (St John 6: 53-58). From this we learn that we are united with God by receiving Holy Communion. In this season of celebration of the birth of Christ, it is fitting that we unite ourselves to Him just as He, through His incarnation, united Himself to us. All parishioners are encouraged to prepare themselves to receive Holy Communion at some stage during the festive period. Preparation involves keeping the appointed fasts to the extent possible, confessing their sins, and reading at least some of the 'Prayers before Holy Communion' found in our prayer books. Please see Father James if you have any questions.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Our parishioners Antonina (Tialshinsky) & Victor; and also for Volodymyr, Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, Olga, Olga, Galina, Tatiana and Daniel

Expectant mothers: Tatiana, Susannah (Orthodox); Alison (non-Orthodox)

Newly-departed: Lyubov (Smieska), who passed away on Friday December 15th after a battle with cancer. Some parishioners will remember Mrs Smieska from our days at the Narara Community Centre.

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George, Theodore



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Our parish newsletter is 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).