

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК
PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 70, November 2007 ~

ORTHODOX LIFE: THE NATIVITY FAST

Рождественский пост

Wednesday November 28th will be the first day of the Nativity Fast this year, the period of spiritual preparation that we observe in the 6 weeks prior to the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or Christmas.

Fasting is limiting the kind (and sometimes the amount) of food we eat. This physical fast should be accompanied by a spiritual effort - an increase in prayer and good deeds, and a struggle against evil thoughts, desires, and actions. The point of fasting is to purify our bodies, strengthen our wills, elevate our souls over our bodies, give glory to God, and honour His saints.

Some think of this fast of as an "easy" one, as there are many feast days during it, and fish can be eaten on Saturdays and Sundays. Others find it difficult as there are often many "end-of-year" functions at this time and fasting is inconvenient. Regardless of this, the Nativity fast does present us with particular opportunities.

The first is to be charitable. Because Christmas has come to be associated primarily with family, and holidays, and gifts, people have a lot of expectations. These expectations put a lot of pressure on people, and sadly, this time of year can be an unhappy one for many. There is an increase in domestic violence, marriage breakdown, and suicide at this time of year. Some children go without gifts, and the festive season can be one without joy for many.

All of this gives an opportunity for us to really live and show our Christian faith. We can visit lonely people, and give gifts and financial support to those in need. Because of the emphasis on giving gifts at Christmas it is possible at this time of year to send presents like a Christmas hamper anonymously. Many charities collect money to help the needy, or toys to give to children. It doesn't matter that this is not for our Orthodox Christmas. What matters is that we seek to relieve the unhappiness of others.

With regard to charitable work, we will be making a particular effort as a parish during this period to collect money to assist large needy families in Russia. There will be collections in church on Sunday December 2nd and Sunday January 6th, and those who want to will also be able to take home a collection tin to make regular contributions.

We also have the opportunity to strengthen our will, and increase our efforts. This is very often a time of excess. December is full of parties and functions. We need to turn away from that as much as we can, and focus on the coming feast. We must pray more, and prepare for Holy Communion, both during the fast and on the feast day itself. In Gosford, we will have four Sunday services and one feast-day service during the fast. Think in addition about making arrangements to attend the services elsewhere - in Newcastle, or in Sydney. If this is not possible, dedicate at least a little more of your time to God, by spiritual reading, or in prayer.

It helps to remember why we have this fast. One reason the church instituted this fast was to honour the suffering of the Most Holy Mother of God. The scribes and Pharisees tormented her terribly before the birth of our Lord, accusing her of immorality. In addition to this, she had to deliver her baby, the Son of God Himself, in a cave used as a stable. How great was her affliction in those days, and for the sake of our salvation! For us to endure a little restraint for our own salvation is nothing in comparison.

Of course, the main reason that we keep this fast is that we are preparing to commemorate the birth in a stable, all those centuries ago, of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. We need to remember, however, that it's not just about ancient history. In the prayers before communion we say "As Thou didst consent to lie in a cave and in a manger of dumb beasts, so consent also to lie in the manger of my defiled soul". In Holy Communion, we come into contact with Christ just as truly as the shepherds and the wise men all those years ago. Let this be the goal of our fasting - to receive Christ. May God grant us the resolve to use this season and the opportunities it brings to prepare ourselves for this!

FASTING GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIVITY FAST IN 2007-2008

Strictly speaking, every day from November 28th until January 6th should be one on which no meat or dairy products are eaten. Fish is permitted on every Saturday and Sunday during December, and also on November 29th and December 4th, 10th, 13th, 18th, 19th, and 25th. Wine and oil are permitted on "fish" days, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and also on December 6th, 7th, 11th, 17th, 20th, 26th and 27th. Fish, wine (or alcohol in general), and oil are all allowed on these fasting days in honour of certain saints' days; the "higher" the rank of the saint, the more we can relax our fasting. It is acknowledged, of course, that people observe the fast in many different ways, each according to their strength. Talk to Father James if you have any questions or concerns.

A BABY ARRIVES!

On Friday November 2nd Father James and Matushka Marie's seventh child - a boy! - was born, arriving shortly before midnight. They have named the baby Peter in honour of the Holy New Martyr Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa. God willing, Peter is to be baptized after Divine Liturgy at Gosford on Sunday November 18th, and will receive Holy

Communion for the first time the following Sunday at Wallsend. His baptism will be followed by a BBQ for parishioners and friends. Peter's godparents are to be Matthew Andrejev and Tatiana Dmitrieff. May the Lord bless the infant Peter, his family, and his godparents!

SPECIAL COLLECTION

Each year on the Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple (celebrated on December 4th), the parishes of our Diocese are obliged to take up a collection in support of the charitable activities of Orthodox Action - Sydney. Orthodox Action provides for destitute children in Russia and other countries of the former USSR, with particular assistance given to children's homes, orphanages, and large needy families. As will be understood from references elsewhere in this newsletter, this collection is consistent with other charitable activity that our parish will undertake during December. Although we have a service on the feast-day this year, our collection will be taken up on Sunday December 2nd. Please keep the collection in mind!

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council met on Tuesday November 6th. During a long meeting, the main items discussed were:

- **Our Annual General Meeting:** Father James reported that the AGM would be held over until early 2008, with the most likely date being Sunday February 17th. The delay is to ensure that the parish accounts are properly prepared and presented;
- **A review of financial records and management:** Father James reported on his recent review of the parish financial records. He noted that the current system had developed gradually as the parish had emerged from mission days back at Narara and before, changing only slightly as the transition was made to a fully-fledged parish. It was thus necessary to make some changes to ensure that the records were appropriate now. He outlined a number of changes to record-keeping and financial management that he would be formally recommending once parish treasurer Sophia Kfoury and he had had the opportunity to complete the review;
- **The summer 2007-08 schedule of services:** Father James tabled a draft Schedule of Services for the coming summer months. He noted that the service on the 5th Sunday in December 2007 would not be an English service as it would be unlikely that Matushka Marie would be able to conduct. He also noted in advance that the midnight Easter service would once again be in Wallsend this year;
- **A clean-up day:** It was agreed that on Saturday December 22nd, beginning at 8.00am, there would be a general clean-up of the church and grounds in preparation for the festive season;

- **A deacon for our parish:** Father James reported that it was planned that Subdeacon Martin Naef of the Croydon parish would be ordained to the diaconate on December 25th 2007 during the Divine Liturgy at the Diocesan Youth Conference. Upon his ordination the new deacon will serve our parish and the Croydon parish;
- **Delegates to the forthcoming Diocesan conference:** In view of the fact that the AGM was not convened as planned, Father James asked the Parish Council to select a lay delegate to attend the Diocesan Conference to be held in Strathfield on November 23rd and 24th. As it was not possible for anyone to attend on both days, it was agreed that the parish would be represented by Victor Bendevski on Friday November 23rd and Paul Pereboeff on Saturday November 24th. Father James will be present on both days;
- **A parish Privacy Policy:** Father James tabled a report and draft Privacy Policy prepared at his request by parishioner Sebastian Reid. The report set out information about privacy legislation in Australia and the pros and cons of a parish Privacy Policy. Father James asked Parish Council members to read the material with a view to further discussion at the next meeting. In view of the fact that the parish is entrusted with sensitive information about individuals such as addresses and other contact details and information concerning births, deaths, marriages, and marital status, Father James considered it prudent to have a policy concerning the gathering, storage, use and release of this information;
- **The purchase of new church items from Russia:** Father James reminded the Parish Council that the Ladies' Auxiliary had agreed to purchase two new gilded candle-stands, a set of wedding crowns, a vessel for holding holy water during services and processions, vessels for the washing of hands during Divine Liturgy, and four sets (white, blue, gold, and red) of priestly vestments. Father Alexander Korjenewski had obtained a quote for these items and also for a set of icons depicting the saints commemorated each day of the year. The total order being within budget, Father James had confirmed the order;
- **The building of an awning adjoining our parish centre:** Building and Maintenance Co-ordinator Rick Golovin proposed the building of a weatherproof awning over the area adjoining our parish centre, at present sheltered by two large sun shades. A long discussion concerning investment in improvements to our current parish centre as opposed to mortgage reduction followed. It was ultimately agreed that the awning be built, this increasing the sheltered space available for parish needs. Rick advised that he expected construction to be finished by late December;
- **An emergency evacuation plan:** Rick advised the Parish Council of the legal requirement to have an emergency evacuation plan. He will represent the parish in the development of the plan for the whole 8 units at 7 Comserv Close. Further

advice will be provided to parishioners in due course. It is likely that a poster outlining the emergency evacuation plan will be displayed in the church hall;

- **Charitable work and fundraising:** Charities and Fundraising Co-ordinator Paul Pereboeff reported on plans to raise funds during the Nativity Fast (the Lenten period commencing on November 28th and ending on Christmas Day) for children in Russia. The funds raised will be given to the Russian Children's Fund (Российский Детский Фонд), an organization that has for some time been actively supported by our parishioner Katya Rubbo and her husband Mike, and also by Orthodox Action. Money-boxes will be available in church from Sunday November 18th for those wishing to be involved. All parishioners are encouraged to take a tin and to use this period of increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving to help the needy. A final general collection will be held on Christmas Eve, Sunday January 6th. Please give generously! Paul also tabled a letter of thanks from Gosford Hospital for our donation to them earlier this year, and reported on plans for the next fishing competition. The letter and some details concerning the fishing competition are reproduced elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Parish Council is due to meet next on Tuesday December 4th 2007.

PARISH BOOKSTORE

It was reported in the last issue of the newsletter that Father James had sought and obtained the approval of the Parish Council for funding to expand the small parish kiosk, the expanded kiosk to be administered by a young parishioner, Christopher Dowling. Final arrangements are now being made to order a number of spiritual books and DVDs from Russia. In the last fortnight, a friend of the parish has kindly offered to pay for an initial order of new English-language books about Orthodox Christianity and spiritual life, and another friend has donated two bookshelves with lockable glass doors, just the thing to display the books and DVDs in! It is hoped that the kiosk will be up and running early in 2008. Enquiries can be directed to Chris in person at church or by email to bookstore@gosfordrussianchurch.org.au.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There have been a number of announcements concerning our Annual General Meeting. As has been explained above, the meeting has been postponed until February 2008. Information about the AGM will be provided in the January and February 2008 issues of this newsletter, and in specific mail-outs to parish members.

SUMMER SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

A schedule of services for the summer months is now available in church, and should be posted on the website shortly. In December 2007 there will be three Sunday services in addition to a service on Tuesday December 4th for the feast of the Entry of the

Mother of God into the Temple. In January we will have our usual Sunday services with some changes because of the festive season. The service on the morning of Sunday January 6th, Christmas Eve, will be followed by Vespers with 8 Old Testament readings. Some of these will be read in Slavonic and some in English. There will be no service in Gosford on the morning of Christmas Day. The service on the morning of January 20th, the day after Theophany, will be followed by the Great Blessing of Water, and afterwards Father James will be blessing parish homes according to custom. February will be a quiet month. Great Lent begins in early March, and the autumn schedule will be somewhat busier as a result.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 5TH ANNUAL FISHING COMPETITION

Preparations are now underway for our 5th annual fishing competition. As well as being an important fundraising activity, our annual fishing competitions have become a social event of some importance, giving a diverse group of people the opportunity to get together to support the church by doing what they enjoy most. God willing, the competition will in 2008 take place on Saturday February 9th, with a family fishing day to follow a fortnight later on Saturday February 23rd. As in previous years, the competition will be held at Deerubben Reserve by the Hawkesbury River. A new feature of the competition this year will be the possibility of fishing outside the heads. The organisers are Paul Pereboeff (0414-950741), Victor Bendeovski (0410-327635), George Karmadonoff, Peter Iliuk and Craig Koppman. They are next meeting on December 12th.

PARISH LIFE: A CHRISTMAS RAFFLE



The Ladies' Auxiliary has organised a fundraising Christmas Raffle. There will be four prizes:

1st prize: A basket of wine

2nd prize: A toy Animal Hospital

3rd prize: A chocolate cake

4th prize: A gingerbread Christmas tree

Tickets are \$1.00 each and will be available at church after each Sunday service. The raffle will be drawn on Sunday January 6th. Please buy a ticket!

CHARITABLE WORK: LETTER FROM GOSFORD HOSPITAL

The letter on the following page is from Gosford Hospital, and acknowledges the fundraising parish undertaken by our parish during the Apostles' Fast this year. We will continue to consider ways that our charitable work as a parish can assist both the church and the wider local community.

NORTHERN SYDNEY
CENTRAL COAST
NSW HEALTH

October 15, 2007

Paul Pereboeff
Charities & Fundraising Co-ordinator
St Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Community
4/7 Comserv Close
WEST GOSFORD NSW 2250

Dear Paul

I would like to thank you and the members of your parish for your generous donation of \$500.00.

As requested, this donation will be used towards the purchase of medical equipment or patient comfort items for Gosford Hospital and will assist in the treatment and comfort of our patients.

Thank you for your interest in continuing support of Gosford Hospital. It is heartening for staff, patients and their relatives to know that the community is willing to help enhance our services. Our Fundraising Co-ordinator, Jill Warwicker, will contact you with regard to specific areas of need within Gosford Hospital that you may be willing to support.

Attached is your receipt numbered 823432.

Again, our thanks.

Yours sincerely



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LATEST ISSUE OF "THE VOICE"

"The Voice" is the official English-language publication of our Diocese. Recent editions have been of a particularly high quality, and the latest issue (October 2007) is no exception. This edition has a number of extracts from a book entitled "May God Give You Wisdom: The Letters of Father John Krestiankin". Father John was a righteous priest and a confessor of the faith in Russia in the 20th Century. His letters are most edifying to read, and are full of profitable advice and guidance. This is certainly a book that we will seek to stock in our bookstore.

DIOCESAN LIFE: 43rd ANNUAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

As has been noted in a previous issue of the newsletter, this year's Diocesan youth conference will be held in Sydney, at the Crosslands Youth & Convention Centre in Galston, near Hornsby. The conference will run from December 23rd until December 28th. Further information is available at www.syezd2007.com.

Father James has been invited to talk and will be speaking about meeting the challenges to Orthodoxy presented by sectarian Protestantism and large Pentecostal congregations such as Hillsong.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

Ioanna, Anatoly and family

Traveling abroad: Deacon Christopher, Matushka Julie and family

The sick & suffering: Our parishioner Victor (Manjetny); and also for Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, Olga, Galina, George, Tatiana and Daniel

Expectant mothers: Ethel

Mothers and babies: Matushka Marie and baby Peter

Newly-married: Philip & Anastasia, Paul & Maria, Shannon John & Olga

Newly-baptised: Infants Sophia (17.11.07) and Peter (18.11.07)

Newly-departed: Antonina (Tialshinsky), a parishioner at West Gosford; Gennady (Zdanowicz)

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, and former parishioners and benefactors Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan)



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