

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК
PARISH NEWSLETTER

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**CHURCH LIFE: METROPOLITAN KIRILL OF SMOLENSK AND
KALININGRAD ELECTED NEW PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW**

It was reported in the last newsletter that there was to be a Church Council in Moscow at the end of January 2009, with the primary task of electing a new patriarch. On the evening of January 27, 2009, the Local Council ['Pomestny Sobor'] of the Russian Orthodox Church elected His Eminence Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad as the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Patriarch Kirill, as Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kalliningrad, had previously been appointed Guardian ['Locum Tenens'] of the

Patriarchal Throne.

Patriarch Kirill's election is significant for our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia in that it is the first such election that our bishops and other representatives have participated in.

Patriarch Kyrill was enthroned at Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow on Sunday, February 1st. The text of Patriarch's edifying enthronement speech is given elsewhere in this newsletter. Below is the text of the Epistle of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, a document that, together with Patriarch Kyrill's address, highlights the important tasks at hand for our Church.

**CHURCH LIFE: EPISTLE OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF THE
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Dear in the Lord Pastors, Divinely-Wise Monks and Nuns, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, faithful children of our Holy Church!

The Local Council, held on January 27-28, 2009, at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, addresses you with the words of the Apostle: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Council has deemed worthy the fruits which, by the mercy of God, our Church has brought to the Lord over these last eighteen years since the last Local Council. At that Council, by the will of the Holy Spirit, the Hierarchy and the people of God chose His Holiness Patriarch Alexey II of Moscow and All Russia of blessed memory. This Council approved the works of the Councils of Bishops from 1990-2009, and the ecclesiastical efforts in various areas made during the Patriarchal service of His Holiness the late

Patriarch. Expressing due gratitude to him for all his labours and cares, we appeal to our pastors and children of our Church to prayerfully remember our late Patriarch. His Holiness strove tirelessly to preserve the unity of the Church, protecting her from schisms and divisions, uniting people of various nationalities, generations and social strata. The main deed achieved by His Holiness the Patriarch, together with the late Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, was the reestablishment of the unity of the Russian Church Abroad and the Church in the Fatherland. And today, remembering the legacy of our late Patriarch, we must preserve and strengthen church unity, not allowing anyone to sow the seeds of discord among us.

Keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) is a sign of the presence of Christ Himself in the community of His followers. Even as we preserve unity in the main thing—the Holy Orthodox Faith—we can have differences in individual questions relating to the life of the Church or society. But these differences must not lay the foundation for enmity, division and unfair accusations. The Local Council supports the document of the Holy Council of Bishops of 2008 "On the Unity of the Church" and calls upon the Fullness of the Church to follow it.

On January 27 of this year, by the will of the Holy Spirit, the Council elected His Eminence Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad as the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

We ask the entire Church flock to fervently pray that our Chief Pastor, the Lord Jesus Christ, bountifully pours forth His mercies on the service of the new, sixteenth Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, that He grant him undiminished help in all his efforts, strengthen his spiritual and physical powers towards service to the Holy Church, that the Patriarchal labors of His Holiness Vladyka, our Father, the newly-elected Patriarch Kirill, bring fruits blessed by God.

During the last century, our Church passed through the furnace of tribulations, preserving faith and devotion to Christ. Today, new possibilities arise before her: missionary work, which we must actively pursue, for the Christian mission is the direct legacy of the Saviour. The Resurrected Christ calls upon His disciples to follow Him and preach Divine Truth. The Lord came to save, but, in the words of the Apostle, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). May we all be servants and preachers of Christ the Saviour, "by whom we have received grace and apostleship" (Romans 1:5).

The pastoral word and the example of Christian good works must reach the hearts of those who call themselves Orthodox Christians, but do not live a churchly life. For they are also a part of our Church, called by the Lord towards salvation. Rejoicing at the growing number of churches and priests, we must remember that it is the condition of the souls of men, their participation in the Mysteries and divine services, their moral and spiritual image that are the essential criteria of the efforts of the Church. We are called upon to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel of Christ, "that they might have life, and that they might have it

more abundantly" (John 10:10). We must declare that only by following the eternal and unchanging moral values granted by Divine Revelation will we be able to overcome internal individual crises, the disintegration of the family and social problems. The Church carries this testimony to the entire world, to all people, especially children and youth. This is precisely why we must take the opportunity today to boldly turn to the young generation through preaching, through school, through the mass media.

Service to the church has always been yoked to care for people, those who need help and sympathy. Our duty is to feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, defend the unfairly injured, help the elderly, support the lonely, lighten the burden of the ailing, console those in despair.

The Local Council calls upon all the devoted flock of our Church to strengthen their unity in the name of Christ under the omophorion of our new Primate, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Through unified effort we must "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and participate in the spiritual education of those near and far. "Pray," said the Apostle, "that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). The most important thing is that we abide in the love of Christ, which supersedes state borders, national or other divisions, that we may fulfil the testament of the Saviour, Who prayed his Heavenly Father for those who believe in Him: "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21).

May the Lord God, glorified in the Holy Trinity, through the intercession of the Most-Pure Mother of God, by the prayers of the New Martyrs and Confessors and all the saints of our land, have mercy upon us and save us, through His grace and love for mankind. Amen.

CHURCH LIFE: ENTHRONEMENT ADDRESS OF PATRIARCH KIRILL

Your Beatitudes, Primates and representatives of the Holy Churches of God! Esteemed President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Anatolievich Medvedev! Respected Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin! Esteemed heads and representatives of the states, the Orthodox people of which stay in the bosom of the Moscow Patriarchate, representatives of other countries! Most Reverend brother archpastors! Honourable fathers, mother superiors, dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

By the will of the Holy Spirit and members of the Local Council of our Church, I, the unworthy, was elevated by my brothers to the Throne of the Patriarchs of Moscow and All Russia and received from them the insignia of patriarchal dignity. Your prayers and your kind faces exhorted me today, before I begin my patriarchal ministry which cannot be either easy, or unimpeded. The Lord and the Church have placed a heavy cross on me, the burden of which demands complete dedication and commitment to the ministry to which I am called, having been seated on the Patriarchal throne three times. It is not without reason that the great *paraman* [a monastic vestment - ed.] is placed on the Patriarch's shoulders as a symbol of renunciation of everything but the patriarchal ministry, a symbol of readiness to be faithful to God to the end through obedience to His will, after the

likeness of the One Who 'humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross' (Philippians 2:8).

There is no room for anything personal or private in the life of the Patriarch: he and his whole being belong absolutely to God and the Church, his heart bleeds for the people of God, and in particular for those who have fallen away from the unity of the Church and for those who have not yet found faith. The patriarchal ministry is a special spiritual feat. It is impossible to perform this feat alone or with support of a limited circle of like-minded persons. All the bishops and the whole Church with the variety of gifts of her members are involved in the accomplishment of this feat through communion in prayer and conciliar labours.

Therefore, being aware of my unworthiness and with inner trepidation, I ascend to the patriarchal throne and humbly entrust myself to the intercession of my holy predecessors, the metropolitans of Kiev and Moscow, before the altar of God. I see with my mind's eye the holy primates of our Church, in particular those who performed their ministry in modern times, beginning with Saint Tikhon the Confessor and ending with His Holiness Patriarch Alexey II of blessed memory.

The Patriarch is the custodian of the inner unity of the Church, and he preserves the purity of faith together with his brother bishops. The Patriarchal enthronement has taken place on the commemoration day of Saint Mark of Ephesus, an audacious defender and champion of the Orthodox faith, and I take this as a special sign from God. The task of the Patriarch is not to allow groupings, which, according to the Apostle, 'must be' (1 Corinthians 11:19), to turn into schisms, disorders, and false teachings. The Patriarch should care for each person with all his unique features to be able to find his place in the church body and, at the same time, care for the various groupings that they not transgress the spirit of love or weaken our common efforts for building up the house of God. The words of St Vincent of Lerins, 'unity in that which is important, freedom in that which is secondary, yet love in all things,' should be the guiding principle of the life of the Church.

The Patriarch is the defender of the canonical borders of the Church. This ministry becomes particularly significant in the situation that has emerged after the formation of independent states in the territory of 'historic Russia.' While respecting their sovereignty and caring for their well-being, the Patriarch is called, at the same time, to be concerned with the maintaining and strengthening of spiritual ties between people living in these countries for the sake of preserving the system of values which the one Orthodox civilization of Holy Russia reveals to the world.

The Church's preaching of spiritual and moral ideals as applied to the realities of life at present should be among the particular concerns of the Patriarch. The witness to the truth and beauty of Orthodoxy can be perceived only when people understand clearly the significance of this witness for their private, family and public life and learn to combine the eternal words of God with the realities of their everyday life with its cares, joys and sorrows.

To combine Orthodox faith and the moral of the Gospel with the everyday thoughts and hopes of people means to help them answer the most difficult philosophical and ethical questions of our time. Faith will be understandable and in real demand, irrespective of the variety and discrepancy of views and convictions in society, only when people realize and feel deeply the unquestionable rightness and power of the message which God Himself is sending to people in His revelation. Human thoughts and human words cannot be stronger than the Word of God. If this obvious truth is not evident to many people, this means that the beauty and persuasiveness of the Divine Word is obscured by that what we today call the 'human factor.'

The witness of the Church to the world presupposes not only the sermon in church, but also an open, friendly and interested dialogue, in which both sides are both speaking and listening. The truths of faith become at least understandable through this dialogue, as they come into creative and living contact with the thoughts and convictions of people. The Church enriches herself through this dialogue with the knowledge of what contemporary people are with their way of thinking and their questions to the Church.

This kind of dialogue facilitates a greater understanding among people of different views and convictions, including their religious beliefs, and promotes the consolidation of peace and accord in our societies and states. The relations between the Church and the State should develop in the framework of a friendly dialogue and cooperation on the basis of the Constitution to serve the good of the Church and the state and the good of people.

The Primates of all Local Churches are called to care for the unity of Universal Orthodoxy together with their brothers from other Churches. I thank the first hierarchs and representatives of the Holy Orthodox Churches present here for our common prayers, and I state that I shall always be open to dialogue with the sister Churches and to common efforts which would help us strengthen and improve pan-Orthodox cooperation and to attain more coordination of our pastoral and missionary efforts.

We shall particularly care for the youth that is in dire need of spiritual guidance today. In an epoch of moral relativism, when the propagation of violence and depravity steals the souls of young people, we cannot wait patiently for the youth to turn to Christ. We must go to meet young people, no matter how difficult it is to us, middle-aged people and of those of older generation, to help them find the faith in God and the meaning of life as well as the comprehension of what true happiness is. The way of life and thought that result from sincere and profound faith would bring about strong personality, a consolidated family with many children, and a society of solidarity.

Our Christian duty is to care for the suffering, the orphans, the poor, the disabled, the elderly, the prisoners, and the homeless - for all those whom we can help to find hope. The voice of the Church should be also the voice of the weak and the disenfranchised who seek justice.

We have to do much difficult work. I recall now the sacred behests of the first and the fifteenth patriarchs. The Holy Patriarch Job wrote, 'It is a good deed to decorate and build

churches, but if at the same time we defile ourselves by passions, God will spare neither us, nor our churches.' 'A new Russia will raise from ashes and the sinful abyss, as it used to be; a Russia which has given many zealots of faith and piety to the world; a Russia which builds churches in towns and villages and in human hearts; a Russia which shines truth and love to the world - Holy Russia.' May God grant these inspiring words of His Holiness Patriarch Alexey II to become prophetic ones.

I wholeheartedly thank you all who have gathered to pray here. I hope that your prayerful support and the intercession of the whole Church before God will never cease. I address the holy words of Saint Paul to all archpastors, pastors and children of our Church, 'Brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you' (2 Corinthians 13:11). Amen.

PARISH LIFE DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2009

January was a busy and enjoyable time in parish life. We had lovely services for the Nativity of Christ at the beginning of the month, with the church full for both the evening and morning services. A number of people from the Wallsend parish joined us for Divine Liturgy. It was terribly hot on Christmas Day itself, and those who remained behind to share a festive meal found that even our air conditioning was not enough to make things comfortable! On the Saturday after Christmas we had an enjoyable ёлка, or Christmas party, ably organised by some of the young mothers in the parish. Father Christmas visited with gifts for the children, and all present, young and old, enjoyed themselves. We gathered on Sunday 18th, the Eve of Theophany, for Divine Liturgy, followed by the lengthy services of Vespers and the Great Blessing of Water. Father James blessed homes that afternoon, and on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week (having spent Theophany in Newcastle and the second day of the feast in Sydney) travelled around the parish visiting and blessing homes. In early February, Katya Rubbo painted a decorative greeting in Slavonic over the church doors: «Благословен грядый во имя Господне», which in English is "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". In time, we hope to have more decorative work done for the adornment of our church. The latter part of February will also be busy, with four - possibly five! - baptisms, the Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, and our Annual General Meeting.

PARISH LIFE: BOOKSTORE NEWS

Our parish bookstore has now been in operation for around a year, and has been quite a success during that time. As the accounts for the bookstore presented in the Annual Report show, sales for the year totalled over \$3800.00. We have had a range of books in Russian and English, along with other items like DVDs, CDs, and cassettes, and a large order of icons is on the way to us from Russia. We hope to expand the stock a little this year, including greeting cards, baptismal crosses, and other such items.

The bookstore was ably managed over the past year by Chris Dowling. Sadly, Chris has moved away from the Central Coast to take up a graduate position in Canberra with the Australian Public Service, and so will be with us only rarely from now on. Not only have we

lost a bookstore manager, but also an enthusiastic reader and altar server. We wish Chris all the best in his new position, and hope that he will visit us from time to time.

For the time being, Father James will look after the bookstore. Anyone interested in taking responsibility for this important part of parish life should speak to him.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 2009 WINTER CAMP

It was mentioned in the last issue of the newsletter that we were already planning parish camps for July and December 2009. Father Martin has now booked the Crosslands Youth and Convention Centre at Galston Gorge, often a venue over the years for Diocesan youth conferences, for the weekend of July 17th-19th. Parishioners and friends are asked to keep this weekend free for the winter camp, which will begin on Friday night and finish on Sunday afternoon. As these dates coincide with the commemoration of the Royal Martyrs of Russia, the camp this year will be dedicated to them. More information will be made available in due course. For those interested, some photos from the summer camp can still be viewed online at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/gosfordrussianchurch/>. The link is also available through the parish website.

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEANING

The Parish Council is still seeking to draw up a roster of people to assist with the regular cleaning tasks. The regular tasks included removing wax from the candle stands, scraping wax from the floor and sweeping, dusting, cleaning the glass on the icons, and vacuuming. Ideally, this could be done after each Sunday service. A good arrangement would be for two families at a time to take responsibility for cleaning. This would mean that each family has a turn approximately once every three months. Regular worshippers at our church are asked to give thought to this, and to see Father James or Olga Petroff if they are willing to assist. A roster can then be drawn up.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

After a brief meeting on Tuesday December 16th, Parish Council convened for two long meetings on Tuesday January 14th and Tuesday February 3rd. At the January meeting, the Parish Council reviewed in detail the first draft of the parish Annual Report. A decision was taken at this meeting to establish a "Future Fund" for the needs of the parish in years to come. The Parish Council agreed to contribute \$10,000 a year to this fund. The Auditing Committee convened on the evening of Sunday February 1st, working until late at night to review the accounts of the parish and, for the first time, the Ladies' Auxiliary and the parish bookstore in considerable detail. With the final accounts and the Auditing Committee's report incorporated into the Annual Report, the Parish Council reviewed and endorsed the final draft at the February meeting. The Annual Report has since been distributed to all parish members and regular worshippers, and will be presented to the Annual General Meeting on Sunday February 15, 2009. Additional copies of the Annual Report can be obtained from the parish website.

PARISH LIFE: AUTUMN 2009 SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

As of Saturday February 14, the Autumn (March, April and May) schedule of services will be available in church. This schedule covers Great Lent, Holy Week, Pascha, and the Paschal period through until Ascension. There are 44 (!) services over these three months, many of them evening services during Great Lent. This is a particularly important time in the life of our Church, and attendance at the beautiful Lenten services assists greatly with keeping the fast and an increased focus on prayer. All are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities that the Lenten Divine Services present to deepen one's spiritual life.

DIOCESAN LIFE: FORTHCOMING SPIRITUAL TALK

The Sydney Orthodox Theological Association (SOTA) has arranged another spiritual talk, this one to be held during Great Lent. Entitled 'Glory to God in All Things - Understanding and Confronting Secularism in Modern Society', the seminar will be held at Saint George Church in Carlton on 29 March 2009. Speakers will include Father John Vesic, Paul Nicolau, Ian Michie, and Daniel Kisliakov. Lunch will be served at 12.30pm, with lectures beginning at 1.00pm. Cost: \$20.00, or \$15.00 concession. Those wishing to know more can contact SOTA by email at sydneyorthodoxtheology@gmail.com or Daniel Kisliakov by telephone on 0425-809702.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

Newly-enthroned: Patriarch Kirill

Special needs: Mark and family, George and family

The sick: Priest Simeon; our parishioner Victor (Manjetny); and also for Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, Olga, Leonid, Margaret, Galina, Tatiana, Nun Euphrosyne, Constantin, Stephen

Expectant mothers: Susannah, Kira

Newly-baptised: Infant Alexandra (Momot)

Preparing for baptism: Larissa, Elena and Sophia (28.2.2009)

Departed: Patriarch Alexis, Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, and former parishioners and benefactors Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan), and Elena (Yakupova)



4/7 Comserv Close
West Gosford NSW 2250
PO Box 3356
Erina NSW 2250
www.gosfordrussianchurch.org.au
info@gosfordrussianchurch.org.au

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 (katya.marco@gosfordrussianchurch.org.au).