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**PARISH LIFE: JULY - AUGUST 2011**

Parish Council met on 19 July, with items for discussion including preparations for the parish feast day, a report on the successful kids fishing day, the possibility of a choir loft to be constructed, drafting of a parish awards policy, and a roster to be organised for the candle desk. It was decided that the Nativity Fast money box collection will benefit the convent of St Elisabeth in Minsk, Belarus.

On Saturday 23 July Father James baptised Isabella Usacheva, the infant daughter and first child of Kyril and Irina Usachev. Isabella's sponsors at baptism were Dominico and Alla Monteleone. Isabella's patron saint is the Righteous New Martyr of Russia, Grand Duchess Elizabeth. May God grant His newly-baptised servant Isabella many years, and continue to bless her parents Kyril and Irina!

On Sunday July 31, after Divine Liturgy, Father James baptised Michael, the infant son (and first child) of Anton and Aksana Sidorkin of Watanobbi. Misha's godparents were Alexander Lagun and Nadia Adzinets. Congratulations to Anton and Aksana, and to Alexander and Nadia. May God grant His newly baptised servant Michael many years!

Tuesday 9 August was the day of commemoration of the patron saint of our church, the Holy Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon. In view of the fact that we had a regular Sunday service on 7 August and the main festive service planned for 12-13 August, there was no service on 9 August this year. Parish Council met that evening, however.

At this meeting, financial reports were considered for the first time since May. Pleasingly, parish finances are in a healthy state, with the balance of our 'Future Fund' now totalling \$29,214.63. Final arrangements were made for our feast-day services, and a number of other administrative matters were discussed.

On the evening of Friday 12 August we served All-night Vigil in honour of Saint Panteleimon. In addition to Father James, four visiting clergymen were present: Archpriest George Lapardin, Priest Alexander Korjenewski (Carlton), Priest Simon Nekipelov (Strathfield), and Protodeacon Alexander Kotlaroff (Strathfield). Afterwards, the clergy and some of the faithful stayed behind for a festive supper. The visiting clergy took the opportunity to look over our church and hall and to admire Lena Douriguine's lovely photographs from our recent Winter Camp, set out on a display board in the church hall.

The services on Saturday 13 August began with the blessing of water, served together by Father James and Protodeacon Alexander before the doors of the church. Although Father George and Simon were unable to return for the service on Saturday morning, a number of other clergymen arrived: Priest Daniel Metlenko (Centennial Park), Priest Alexander Filchakov (Blacktown), Priest

Seraphim Chemodakov (Croydon), Hieromonk John McPherson (Holy Trinity Monastery, Monkerai), and Deacon Constantine Moshegov (Croydon). The service was a beautiful one with the church filled to overflowing. At the end of the service Father Seraphim gave a sermon on the life and significance of Saint Panteleimon. A moleben to the Saint followed. As people came to venerate the Cross, they were sprinkled with Holy Water and given an icon-card with a prayer to Saint Panteleimon.

Approximately 170 people – friends from Sydney and Newcastle in addition to our own parishioners – then gathered at the Niagara Park Community Centre for a wonderful festive lunch prepared by our Parish Ladies' Auxiliary under the direction of Head sister, Kate Marcotrigiano. A number of beautiful cakes were auctioned and our raffle was drawn. All present had a lovely time, the only disappointment being the need for the bus that brought people from Sydney to depart somewhat earlier than expected. This was a joyful and encouraging day in the life of our parish. A number of photographs can be viewed on our Facebook page.

Sadly, Father Martin was unable to be with us as he was obliged to travel to Europe in connection with his secular employment. He was nevertheless remembered in prayer on the day, and the visiting deacons kindly offered a toast to his health at lunch.

On August 18-19 we had services for the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. All-night vigil with the blessing of bread, wheat, wine and oil was served on Thursday evening. Approximately 30 people gathered for Divine Liturgy on Friday morning, at the end of which was the customary blessing of fruit.

### **PARISH LIFE: SUMMER CAMP**

Inspired by the success of our recent winter parish camp, plans have been made for a summer camp. Crosslands is available on the weekend of December 3-4 and, as it is a convenient and familiar venue, it has been booked. This means that the services for the great feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple will be at the camp. As the weather will be warm, swimming and canoeing will be possible, and we also hope to book the high ropes challenge. Paul and Elena Douriaguine have taken responsibility for organising this camp, and they can be contacted by email at [camp@gosfordrussianchurch.org.au](mailto:camp@gosfordrussianchurch.org.au). Readers are reminded that our camps are NOT just for children and families, but for all parishioners and friends. We hope to see you there!

### **DIOCESAN LIFE: UPCOMING CONFERENCES UPDATE**

Readers will recall that the annual Diocesan Youth Conference was held on the Central Coast last year, and that Father James was on the organising committee. He is involved again this year, with the conference to be held at the Australis at Wisemans Retreat on the Hawkesbury River. This is a strictly over-18s conference and will take place from December 27-31. The theme is "Against the Tide: Maintaining our Orthodoxy in Challenging Times". In addition, there will be a Diocesan "teen retreat" (for Years 9-12) from December 19-23 at the Tops Conference Centre in Stanwell Tops. Archpriest George Lapardin, Priest Seraphim Chemodakov and Priest Simon Nekipelov are organising this retreat. More information about the conference and the retreat are available online at [www.syezd.info](http://www.syezd.info) and [www.rocorteenretreat.info](http://www.rocorteenretreat.info) respectively.

### **PARISH LIFE: SPRING SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

A new Schedule of Services for the spring months – September, October and November – will be available in church as of the weekend of 20-21 August, and copies will be posted or emailed out with this newsletter. We will have only two services apart from our regular Saturday-Sunday service during these months: All-night Vigil and Divine Liturgy for the Great Feast of the

Exaltation of the Cross on Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 September respectively. There will be no services at Gosford on the weekend of October 29-30 (October 30 being the fifth Sunday that month) as Father James will be in Adelaide for a wedding at the Russian Orthodox Church in that city, dedicated to Saint Nicholas.

### **CHURCH LIFE: DORMITION AT WALLSEND**

The final Sunday in August this year, Sunday 28, is the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, the most important of the feast-days of the Virgin Mary in our church calendar. Father James will be serving in Wallsend on this day. The feast of the Dormition has a particular importance for the Wallsend parish, it being the occasion of the first known Russian Orthodox service in the Hunter Valley, served in a church in Greta in 1949, sixty-two years ago this year. Greta, a small village in the upper Hunter, was the site of a military base that later became a large migrant camp in which many of the older Wallsend parishioners lived for a time.

At the end of Divine Liturgy, following the customary blessing of fragrant herbs, there is always a brief memorial service for the ever-memorable Archpriest John Lupish, his Matushka Maria, and the other departed founders of Russian Orthodoxy in the Hunter region. This year, there will also be a festive BBQ lunch afterwards in the churchyard at Wallsend. Those Gosford parishioners who are able to do so are encouraged to be present on the day. Only 88 kms and one hour's drive from West Gosford, or 114 kms and one hour and ten minutes from Berowra! Please let Father James know if you are planning to attend so as to assist with catering.

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE: TALK AND BBQ**

A spiritual talk by Archpriest Nikita Chemodakov, the Dean of the NSW Parishes, entitled 'What does fasting really mean', will take place on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 3pm in the Fairfield parish of St Nicholas (Barbara St, Fairfield) and will be followed by a BBQ. Text or email RSVP for the BBQ to Paul Proszenko 0412945590 or [proszenko\\_paul@hotmail.com](mailto:proszenko_paul@hotmail.com) by 2 September.

### **PARISH LIFE: FACEBOOK AND TWITTER**

A parish presence on the social networking applications Facebook and Twitter has been created. This will help get information about church life out to many parishioners and friends much more quickly than by means of the newsletter or the parish website. Photographs, service schedules and news are the focus. Search for 'Gosford Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Panteleimon' on Facebook to "like" the page, or to become a follower on Twitter, search for "Gosford Church".

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE: THE DORMITION FAST**

The Dormition fast was established as preceding the great feasts of the Transfiguration of the Lord and of the Dormition of the Mother of God. It lasts two weeks—from August 1/14–August 14/27 (old style/new style).

The Dormition fast comes down to us from the early days of Christianity. We find a clear reference to the Dormition fast in a conversation of Leo the Great from around the year 450 A.D. "The Church fasts are situated in the year in such a way that a special abstinence is prescribed for each time. Thus, for spring there is the spring fast — the Forty Days [Great Lent]; for summer there is the summer fast [the Apostles' fast]; for autumn there is the autumn fast, in the seventh month [Dormition fast]; for winter there is the winter fast [Nativity fast]."

St. Symeon of Thessalonica writes that, "The fast in August [Dormition fast] was established in honor of the Mother of God the Word; Who, foreknowing Her repose, ascetically labored and fasted for us as always, although She was holy and immaculate, and had no need for fasting.

Thus, she especially prayed for us in preparation for being transported from this life to the future life, when her blessed soul would be united through the Divine spirit with her Son. Therefore, we also should fast and praise her, emulating her life, urging her thereby to pray for us. Some, by the way, say that this fast was instituted on the occasion of two feasts—the Transfiguration and the Dormition. I also consider it necessary to remember these two feasts—one which gives us light, and the other which is merciful to us and intercedes for us.”

The Dormition fast is not as strict as the Great Fast, but it is stricter than the Apostle’s and Nativity fasts. The spiritual fast is closely united with the bodily, just as our soul is united with the body, penetrates it, enlivens it, and makes one united whole with it, as the soul and body make one living human being. Therefore, in fasting bodily we must at the same time fast spiritually: “Brothers, in fasting bodily let us also fast spiritually, severing all union with unrighteousness,” the Holy Church enjoins us.

The main thing in fasting bodily is restraint from abundant, tasty and sweet foods; the main thing in fasting spiritually is restraint from passionate, sinful movements that indulge our sensual inclinations and vices. The former is renunciation of the more nourishing foods for fasting food, which is less nourishing; the latter is the renunciation of our favourite sins for exercise in the virtues which oppose them.

The essence of the fast is expressed in the following Church hymn: “If you fast from food, my soul, but are not purified of the passions, in vain do we comfort ourselves by not eating. For if the fast does not bring correction, then it will be hateful to God as false, and you will be like unto the evil demons, who never eat.” The Great Fast and the Dormition Fast are particularly strict with regard to entertainment—in Imperial Russia even civil law forbade public masquerades and shows during these fasts.

*Adapted from: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/132194.html>*

### THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

**The sick:** Subdeacon Vitaly (Lupish) and Nun Euphrosyne; our parishioners Nestor, Olga, Michael, Tatiana, and Boris.

**Departed:** Patriarch Alexis, Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, infant Ekaterina, and former parishioners and benefactors Irene (Claydon), Victor (Manjetny), Vladimir (Dmitrieff), George (Fomin), Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan), Elena (Yakupova), Lydia (Ustimko).

**Expectant mothers:** Daria, Svetlana, Maria, Anastasia, Natalia.



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