



russian orthodox
church of
saint panteleimon
gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК PARISH NEWSLETTER

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С РОЖДЕСТВОМ ХРИСТОВЫМ!

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

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

To the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and all the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

Your Eminences the archpastors, honourable fathers, venerable monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

On this present light-bearing night we again spiritually relive the joy of the world's finding of its Saviour. Again in our thoughts we gaze upon the Son of the Living God who lies in a manger of the cave of Bethlehem. Again we hear in our hearts the voice of the angels giving praise to the Creator and Redeemer: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men' (Lk. 2:14).

As we listen attentively to the powers of heaven, we realize that Christ's Nativity is filled with an extra-temporal meaning and has a direct bearing upon the destiny of each human person. Even he who does not know of the Saviour's feat may now acquire the knowledge of the Truth, become a son of God and inherit life eternal. Christ's Nativity reveals to us the truth about ourselves and makes it possible for us to understand and assimilate this truth.

Let us recall that the first man was made by the Creator as perfect 'in the image and likeness of God' (see: Gen. 1:26). Yet Adam transgressed the commandment and distorted the Creator's intention for him. Deprived of a living communion with God, humanity buried itself evermore into the abyss of sin and pride. And then the Lord, in loving his creation and desiring salvation for it, sends into the world his Only-begotten Son, who restored the integrity of human nature and became the New Adam. Christ has shown to us an example of life conforming to the divine plan for the human person. This example is a reliable guide, which enables us not to depart from the way and to find only true direction leading to the fullness of life in both the conditions of our earthly existence and in eternity.

We progress along this saving path when we respond to the calls of God. One such call directed towards us is contained in the Epistle of St. Paul: 'glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's' (1 Cor. 6:20). This means that we render praise to God not only in

our prayers and hymns but also through good deeds for the benefit of our neighbour, people and Church.

This labour becomes a joyous labour in the name of Christ; it genuinely transforms the world around us and ourselves. People achieve a sense of togetherness when they work not by compulsion and not for the sake of gain but when moved by the sincere desire to do good and useful deeds. It is in this way that we serve the Creator together by embodying his will in our lives. The Greek word *leitourgia* ('liturgy') is translated as 'common cause.' Our entire lives should become a Liturgy, a common prayer and cause accomplished so that God's plan for the world and human person may be embodied in life and so that we can thereby give glory and praise to the Creator. This demands from us solidarity with our brothers and sisters in faith and even with those who have not yet found the Lord in their heart yet, like the Magi of the Gospels, find themselves on the path towards him.

The importance of unifying our endeavours in order to overcome tragedy and misfortune was demonstrated to us by the fires, droughts and floods of the past year in Russia and in the other countries of historical Rus'. They once more reminded us of our Christian duty to help our neighbours without regard to their beliefs, nationality and social status. During the hot summer months many people generously shared their efforts, time and material goods with those they may not even know and whom they shall ever likely see. To what purpose did they do this? Out of compassion for those to whom misfortune fell, who experienced hardship and who needed help.

Public solidarity and joint labours for the attainment of common goals are impossible without overcoming selfishness, without forcing oneself to do good, without the renunciation of exclusive attention to our needs and interests. At the foundation of true 'unity of the Spirit' (Eph. 4:3) there lies the law of love bequeathed to us by the Saviour. National unity cannot be limited to merely times of trials. It has to become an integral part of our national self-consciousness and life.

I manifestly felt the strength of church unity during my numerous journeys to the dioceses of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Everywhere I saw the readiness of the bishops, clergy, monks and nuns to labour for the good of the Orthodox Church, to bring to perfection their parochial, monastery and diocesan ministries. This plants hope for a successful growth of church life in the spirit of unity and co-operation.

From the bottom of my heart, which is filled with joy, I congratulate you, Your Eminences the archpastors, honourable clergy, monks and nuns, brothers and sisters, on the great and saving feast of the Nativity of Christ and the New Year. I prayerfully wish that you be zealous executors of the will of God, bringing spiritual gifts to the Saviour of the world who has now been born so that his name be glorified always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

+KIRILL

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

The Nativity of Christ 2010/2011

Patriarch Kirill's epistle in Russian is available at: <http://www.mospat.ru/ru/2011/01/06/news33719/>

NATIVITY EPISTLE OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD

To the archpastors and brethren, the most honourable fathers, & all the Orthodox children of the Russian Diaspora, beloved in the Lord!

*Seeing man perishing, whom He had created
with His own hands, the Creator, bowing
down the heavens, descendeth, and taketh on
the whole of human nature through the pure
Virgin, becoming truly incarnate, in that He
is all-glorious"*

(Canon I of Christmas Matins, Ode I, troparion 2, composed by St. Cosmas of Maiuma)

With these words of the Nativity Canon, so great in their profundity, we glorify Christ the Saviour Who has now been born of the Virgin. Profound and substantial are the divine services in honour of this great feast, the Nativity of Christ. The words of its hymns and prayers are imbued with the glad tidings of the redemption of the human race, of the incomprehensible and glorious event of the divine Incarnation, which is revealed as the Saviour's great loving-kindness toward us sinners!

Christ is now born of the Virgin, so that, having taken upon Himself human nature, He might bring an end to the cruel power of the tormenter of souls, the devil; for only a God Who had become man could deliver us from it. The Master of creation, Whom the angels and the whole world He created obey, lies humbly, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and forgives our offenses, calling us all to a life renewed!

By their fall into sin, Adam and Eve themselves showed their moral bankruptcy, their imperfection. Their idea of becoming gods, equal to the Trinity yet without Its participation, was naive. This audacious plan led the first man and woman into iniquity, into sin, that is to death. And thus did things continue in subsequent ages: as soon as men began to imagine themselves the equals of God, exalting themselves higher than the heavens in their pride, plunging themselves into the depths of the passions, they perished, forgetting their Creator.

And so, desiring that His creation not be destroyed, He of Whom the prophets prophesied, of Whose coming it was said in the Scriptures: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive in her womb, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, which meaneth: God with us," cometh into a world sunk in the darkness of ignorance and spiritually barren. Light appears in the world—Jesus Christ, the God-man—, offering His people a new way of life, following which they will enter into union with God, into communion with Him. The Lord Himself bids us become His children, to have as close a fellowship with Him as human nature is capable of achieving.

Today, the Church invites us to rejoice and sing: "Christ is born! Give ye glory! Christ cometh from heaven!! Greet ye Him!" Let us then glorify Christ our God, Who descended to earth so as to elevate us, delivering us from sinful death! Everything is now full of great joy, for Christ gives us peace—between man and God, and man and his own conscience: "...and on earth peace among men of good will."

We must accept this peace of Christ, so full of love, foreign to falsehood and the other lusts! It is essential that all of us Christians remember that the Lord was born to redeem the sins of all humanity, and for this reason we must love our neighbour, striving to show in deed that we are disciples of Christ! Abiding in the bosom of the Holy Church of Christ, we will learn to live as Christ God, Who is now born, has commanded us. Let us not admit into our souls even the hint of sin and impiety; let us not allow ourselves to be captivated by the dubious and vain things of this world which lead us away from the principal aim of our earthly life—to unite ourselves with God!

I also wish to draw your attention, dear brethren and sisters, to the fact that for us, the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, it is particularly important in the fulfilling of the commandments of the Lord to express our obedience also to the old Russian ideals and traditions that our Church has followed throughout the course of its difficult ninety-year sojourn beyond the boundaries of our homeland. Marking the ninetieth anniversary of the day of the founding of the Church Abroad, which, though independent, was always conscious of itself as an integral part of the local Church of Russia, we, its faithful children, must not only remember, but must also show a living interest in the history of that vast legacy of Russian religious and social thought, which has been preserved thanks to the faithful Russian sons of the Fatherland. Our glorious First Hierarchs—such as Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky), the greatest religious activist of the Russian Orthodox Church and of worldwide Orthodoxy—played a major role in formulating patriotic self-awareness among the Russian émigrés. This glorious representative of the Russian land, the seventieth anniversary of whose repose we will mark next year, was not only a brilliant theologian, but also the mightiest ideologue of the Russian Diaspora. Seeing his zealous struggle of service to the homeland and the Church, many who were in despair amid the most grievous circumstances of life found faith and hope. Such was the glorious struggle of the primatial ministry of the previous leaders of our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which was preserved and continues to live thanks to the grace of God and their merits. How great was their spirit, and how rich the legacy left by them! Let us absorb this; let us feel deeply this great gift of Orthodox Christianity; let us preserve and increase it!

May Christ God, Who became incarnate, help us all in this, that we may abide forever in the bosom of the Holy Orthodox Church, and may with boldness and diligence direct our life according to the precepts of the Gospel, unto the acquisition of eternal salvation! Amen.

*+Hilarion,
Metropolitan of New York & Eastern America,
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad*

Metropolitan Hilarion's epistle in Russian is available at: http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws/synod/2011/20110105_mhchristmasepistle.html

PARISH LIFE: DECEMBER 2010 – JANUARY 2011

On Saturday December 18 the infant Philip, the second son of Kostya and Natasha Kovalenko, was baptised at our church. His godparents were Philip Agius and Elena Fauris. Our warmest congratulations to the newly-baptised Philip and to his parents and godparents!

Our final services in Gosford for 2010 were for the feast of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra in Lycia on Saturday December 18 and Sunday December 19. This was the first time that a feast of Saint Nicholas had been celebrated in our church, Father James usually re-arranging the schedule to ensure that it is served in Wallsend where the church is in fact dedicated to the same Saint Nicholas. It not being the parish feast-day in Newcastle, however, and as changes to the schedule always seem to leave some people stranded at the wrong church without a service, he chose not to do so this year. In honour of this great saint we had a full vigil on the Saturday evening. The following morning church was full, and a great many children – including the newly-baptised infant Philip - were present to receive Holy Communion. After the service, many people stayed for a Lenten BBQ of prawns organised by the Parish Council.

On Saturday December 25 and Sunday December 26 Father James and Father Martin served at the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Strathfield, there being no services in either Wallsend or Croydon that weekend. Metropolitan Hilarion (who had arrived back in Australia a few days before) presided at Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, with 11 priests and 8 deacons from across mainland Australia and New Zealand concelebrating. During Divine Liturgy Deacon Simon Nekipelov was ordained to the priesthood. As a boy and a young man, Father Simon was an altar server in the Cabramatta parish. Following study at the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, NY, he was ordained deacon and appointed to the parish of Saint George in Carlton. He will now serve as second priest at the Cathedral. Father Simon and his Matushka, Maria, have three small children, and another now on the way. May God bless them and help them!

On the evening of Sunday December 26 and all day on Monday December 27 Father James, Father Martin, Rick Golovin and Victor Bendevski represented our parish at the triennial Diocesan Conference, also at the Cathedral. The Conference heard interesting reports from the Metropolitan (concerning Diocesan life), the Diocesan Treasurer (concerning the financial affairs of the Diocese), and the Diocesan Council (concerning a range of important governance and policy initiatives, and a forthcoming conference of parish Wardens and Treasurers). The same Diocesan Council was returned to office for a further three years in recognition of the progress it had made in important areas and the need for continuity in bringing this work to a conclusion. The conference was conducted in an extraordinary spirit of warmth and co-operation. At its next meeting, Parish Council will discuss the implications for the parish of some of the matters raised.

From Monday December 27 until Friday December 31 the 46th Annual Youth Conference of our Diocese took place within our parish boundaries, at Treetops Resort Avoca Beach. Although shorter than previous conferences it was a great success, with a number of thoughtful and relevant presentations. On Thursday December 30 Divine Liturgy was held at the Resort, with Metropolitan Hilarion presiding and 10 priests and 3 deacons concelebrating. So pleased were participants with the conference that it was decided at a plenary session on the final morning that the conference would be held in NSW (quite possibly at Avoca Beach!) again in 2011. Many thanks are due to Rick Golovin for his hard work in transporting items necessary for the church service to and from Avoca Beach.

2010 was our sixth full year at West Gosford. It was yet another positive year in parish life, with lots of activity and new faces around the church. May God continue to bless us in 2011.

On Saturday 1 January Lucas Kfoury, the infant son of Andrew and Cindy Kfoury, was baptised. His godparents were Nicholas Kfoury, Andrew's brother, and Kylie McDonald, Cindy's sister. On the following day Lucas received Holy Communion for the first time. Congratulations to the newly-baptised Lucas and to his parents and godparents!

On Monday 3 January a small but industrious group of parishioners and friends gathered to clean the church in preparation for our Christmas services. Everything was dusted, scrubbed and polished, and maintenance tasks like fixing leaky taps, changing light-bulbs and hanging icons were attended to. Olga Petroff prepared a tasty Lenten lunch for the workers. Many thanks to all who helped! Special mention should be made of Anna Kourbatov and Paul and Lena Douriguine who polished our discoloured gilded candle-stands until they shone.

On Thursday January 6 and Friday January 7 we had services for Christmas. We had a full vigil on Thursday evening with the blessing of loaves, wheat, wine and oil, and the anointing of those present after the Gospel. On Friday morning the church was full to overflowing with more than 120 people present, and over 50 receiving Holy Communion. Many stayed to share a lovely festive meal after the service. After lunch the Sisterhood's Christmas Raffle was drawn, with many present receiving prizes. The raffle raised \$377.00, and contributed to the fun and festivity of the occasion.

On the second day of the feast, Father James served at Croydon together with Metropolitan Hilarion and a number of the priests and deacons from smaller parishes. Unfortunately Father Martin could not be there as he flew out to New Zealand that morning for work. Vladyka Hilarion afterwards welcomed all the clergy and faithful present into his home for a festive meal. All the clergy present reported that the Christmas services this year were particularly well-attended with many preparing for and receiving Holy Communion – at Strathfield, the number of the faithful was such that it was necessary to give Holy Communion from three chalices!

On Thursday January 13 Father James visited the annual camp of the National Organisation of Russian Scouts (NORS), held this year at Camp Wannawong in Loftus, south of Sydney. Participating in the camp were five children from our parish: Nicholas, Elizabeth and Katherine Carles, and Nicholas and Alexander Teliatnikov. Father James served the customary moleben to the Holy Great-Martyr George, the heavenly patron of Russian Scouts, adding prayers for relief from unseasonable rain and flooding in Brisbane and across Queensland. After lunch camp leaders, participants and guests joined together for a number of activities. As in previous years, the camp atmosphere was one of warmth and friendship. NORS is a fine organisation, and one that could perhaps do much good work here on the Central Coast for the youth of our parish and the wider Russian community.

PARISH LIFE: FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Our website content manager, Susanna Bendevski, has recently created a parish presence on the social networking applications Facebook and Twitter. 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 will be the focus. Search for 'Russian Orthodox Church of Saint Panteleimon' on Facebook to "like" the page, or to become a follower on Twitter, search for "GosfordChurch".

ORTHODOX LIFE: THE BLESSING OF HOMES

With Theophany approaching, many people have asked about having their homes blessed with the Holy Water. This blessing of homes at Theophany is a simple one, with the priest sprinkling each home with Holy Water whilst singing the troparion and kontakion of the feast and then offering prayers for the health and salvation of those who live there. This service usually takes only five minutes, and is done each year. The Blessing of a New Home is a different service, and takes somewhat longer. This service is usually performed when residence is taken up in a new home, and involves the anointing of the four walls of the home with blessed oil in addition to the sprinkling of the Holy Water. In many ways, the longer service is like the consecration of a church, something fitting if we consider that home should be the place in which we praise, worship and give thanks to God, serving Him and those closest to us. If need be, of course, the two services can be combined, and often are.

Father James will this year be serving in Gosford on the Eve of Theophany (Крещенский Сочельник) and in Wallsend on the day of the feast itself. He will bless home close to church in Gosford on the afternoon of Tuesday January 18; homes in Newcastle on Wednesday January 19; homes across the Central Coast on Thursday January 20; and homes in and around Hornsby on Friday January 21. Those who wish to have their home blessed should add their name to the list in church, or make direct contact with Father James. If the above dates are inconvenient, other arrangements can be made.

PARISH LIFE: AGM PREPARATION

At this stage, the 2011 AGM is scheduled for Sunday February 20, the last practical date before the beginning of Great Lent. Announcements concerning the AGM will be made in church on January 30 and February 6 and 20. Work on the Annual Report reviewing the 2010 calendar year will commence in January, with the Parish council to review and endorse the report early in February.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

All parish members are now asked to renew their membership, and regular worshippers are invited to consider becoming members. This is particularly important in view of the fact that our AGM will be held in February 2011. The rules governing parish membership are set out in the Normal Parish By-Laws ("the By-Laws") of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR). A person may become a member of a ROCOR parish if they are an Orthodox Christian, have reached the age of 18 years, pay the established membership dues, make their confession and take Holy Communion not less than once a year, and tend to the moral and economic welfare of the parish. In our parish, the annual membership fee is \$20.00. Membership is granted for a calendar year; that is, from January to December. New members gain the right to vote only after 6 months of membership. Those new members who transfer membership from another ROCOR parish may vote immediately. Paragraph 12 of the By-Laws requires any person wishing to become a member of a parish to make a written application to the Parish Council. To make this easier for everyone, our parish has developed an 'Application for Parish Membership' form.

Photocopies of this form can be made, or copies downloaded from our website. Some forms are also available at church. Please ask at the candle desk! Parish members are asked to

complete the 'Application for Parish Membership' form upon annual renewal of membership. This helps ensure that parish records are up-to-date, that personal details remain correct, and that the conditions for membership continue to be met. Any questions or concerns regarding formal parish membership should be raised with Father James. Completed membership forms should be given to our Parish Council secretary, Katya Marcotrigiano, or to any Parish Council member.

PARISH LIFE: WINTER CAMP IN JULY 2011

This coming Winter we will again have a parish camp at Crosslands near Galston Gorge, the venue for our 2009 Winter and Summer camps. A booking has been made for the weekend of July 2-3, the first weekend of the July school holidays. The camp will begin on the evening of Friday July 1 and continue through until the afternoon of Sunday July 3. As July 2 is the day of repose of Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, the camp will be held in his honour. As at previous camps there will be common meals, activities for all ages, an evening campfire, a play, and services Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Please mark the date in your diaries! Possible dates and venues for a summer camp remain under consideration.

COLLECTIONS IN FEBRUARY 2011

Two collections are customarily taken up in parishes of our Diocese during February. These are to assist Orthodox Action – Melbourne, a group that does much charitable work in Russia, and the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, the institution at which most of our clergy undertake their studies. These collections will be taken up in our parish on February 6 and February 20 respectively. Envelopes in which donations can be placed are enclosed with this newsletter and also available in church.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick: Grievously ill Ioanna and her new-born child; Subdeacon Vitaly (Lupish) and Nun Euphrosyne; our parishioners Nestor, Natalia, Michael, Tatiana, Nina, and Boris.

Families with new babies: Shannon & Olga, baby Matthew, and big sister Katya; Ivan & Natalia, baby Alexander, and big brothers Ivan & Anton

Expectant mothers: Irina, Kira.

Departed: Patriarch Alexis, Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, 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).



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