

CHURCH LIFE: REPOSE OF PATRIARCH ALEXIS

On the evening of Friday 5 December we learned with sadness of the repose earlier that day of His Holiness Alexis II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Patriarch Alexis, who was 79 years old, was head of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1990. He had suffered from a heart condition for some time. Patriarch Alexis presided during a period of great significance in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, one during which church life in Russia was renewed. Together with the late ever-memorable Metropolitan Laurus, First Hierarch of our Russia Orthodox Church outside Russia, he was instrumental in overcoming the division of the Russian Orthodox Church. May the Lord give him rest, and make his memory to be eternal!

CHURCH CLEANUP ON SATURDAY JANUARY 3rd

Our usual pre-Christmas general clean-up day at church will be held on Saturday January 3rd, beginning at 8.00 am. This will be a major clean-up, with everything in the church and hall being thoroughly washed, scrubbed and polished in preparation for our Christmas Eve services on January 6th and 7th and our Theophany services on January 17th and 18th. All those who are able to spare a few hours are asked to attend. A list of tasks will be prepared to ensure that everyone has something to do. As is customary, a light Lenten lunch will be served afterwards for all those working.



PARISH LIFE: SUMMER CAMP 2008

As was advised in the November newsletter, Crusaders Lake Mac Outdoor Recreation Centre at Balcolyn (around 30 minutes north of Gosford) has been booked for a parish summer camp on the weekend of Saturday December 20th and Sunday December 21st. This is NOT a kids' camp and NOT just for families, but a parish camp for ALL parishioners: old and young, married and single. The camp will give us a chance to get away, relax in a pleasant environment, build friendships, and develop the common life of our parish. Friends of the parish are also welcome.

The cost is \$65.00 for adults and \$55.00 for children (5-18). This includes accommodation, meals and activities for the weekend. Food preparation will be shared.

Accommodation is available for up to 112 people, primarily in dormitory-style huts with room for 10 people each. There is a swimming pool and BBQ facilities, and arrangements will be made for canoeing and rock climbing. Those interested can also go fishing.

The camp will begin on Saturday afternoon and will continue through until Monday morning. All services that weekend will be at the camp. Weather permitting, Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning will be outside. All who come are encouraged to prepare for Holy Communion. There will be activities for all, as well as plenty of time to relax.

Those wishing to attend should talk to either Father Martin or Sarah Carles as soon as possible.

PARISH LIFE: FUNDRAISING BBQ AT CABRAMATTA

The BBQ held on November 9th at Holy Protection Church, Cabramatta, to benefit our parish, was a great success, raising nearly \$6,000! The Holy Protection parish has shown our church great support over the years, and this is yet another example of their generosity. Father James called the parish priest at Cabramatta, Archpriest Boris Ignatievsky, to thank him personally for the kindness that he and his parishioners have shown. As will be seen elsewhere in this newsletter, this had had a marked impact on our financial position.

PARISH LIFE DURING NOVEMBER

We had services on three weekends in November. All Sunday services were reasonably well attended, with a few new faces, something that is always encouraging. Both Father James and Father Martin celebrated their name-days this month, with Many Years sung for Father James on November 2nd, and for Father Martin on November 30th. Father James baptised three children this month: Daniel and Evelina Sheptitsky, the children of Dmitri and Larissa Sheptitsky, on Saturday November 1st, and Thomas Alexandru Harrison, the son of Matthew and Adriana Harrison, on Saturday November 22nd. We had our customary English service on November 30th, it being the fifth Sunday of the month. We will not have another English service now until May 2009.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Things have certainly moved rapidly over the last few months! In the August 2008 newsletter it was reported that there was just under \$36,000 remaining to be paid on our mortgage. By the time that the September-October newsletter was published, the Parish Council was considering a debt elimination appeal. This proceeded informally and by word of mouth, and yet by November the balance owing on the mortgage was less than \$15,000. At that stage, we hoped that we would be able to pay out our loan by the end of 2009, 8 years early. Since then, however, further donations, regular repayments and the monies raised by the BBQ at Cabramatta have reduced the outstanding debt even further, to just over \$6,000. Parish Council met on November 11th, and in view of these developments, decided to direct a portion of the funds raised by the Ladies' Auxiliary towards final elimination of the debt. This means that we will be completely debt-free by the end of December 2008, just 5 years after purchasing our parish centre at West Gosford! Although we expect to stay at West Gosford for some years

yet, our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in February 2009 will now be one at which we will consider options for the future of our parish.

Also discussed at the November Parish Council meeting were plans for the fishing competition in 2009; the customary charitable collection during the Nativity Fast; work to date on administrative guidelines; improvements in the Ladies' Auxiliary financial records; plans for the 2009 AGM; and financial assistance to the parish camp.

The Parish Council will next meet on Tuesday December 16th.

PARISH LIFE: SERVICES DURING SUMMER 2008-2009

The Summer 2008-09 Schedule of Services is now available in church and online. We have services at West Gosford on only one weekend during December, with services on Saturday December 20th and Sunday December 21st at our parish camp. Our Sunday service on December 7th will be for the feast of the Great-Martyr Catherine, and is the name-day of four parishioners: Katya Lugovoy, Kate Marcotrigiano, Katya Rubbo, and Katie Carles. All four have contributed in important ways to parish life, and we wish them every blessing from the Lord. During January we have services for the Nativity of Christ - or Christmas - on Tuesday 6th and Wednesday 7th, and for the Eve of Theophany on Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th. During February we will have just the regular weekend services, with services on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th being for the Great Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple.

PARISH LIFE: CHRISTMAS SERVICES

We will have three Christmas services this year: All-night Vigil on Tuesday January 6th at 6.00pm; Divine Liturgy on Wednesday January 7th at 9.00am; and Great Vespers later that day, at 3.00pm.

Father James will be at church from 5.00pm on Tuesday January 6th should anyone wish to make their confession before the service begins.

Following Divine Liturgy on Wednesday January 7th, there will be a festive lunch in the church hall for all who wish to stay. Those who can are asked to bring a plate of festive food to share. Matushka Marie will coordinate the food, so please let her know what you will bring. This will be a nice opportunity for those unable to spend the day with family and friends to get together and celebrate, before finishing the day in prayer at Vespers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Father James will be away from Friday December 26th until Tuesday December 30th, attending the 42nd Annual Youth Conference on the Gold Coast. He will be giving a talk entitled 'Responding to death with Faith, Hope and Love'. In the event of an emergency, he can be contacted on his mobile telephone: 0428-639156. ~ English-language Orthodox calendars with details of fasting periods and all major feasts will be available

in church by mid-December. ~ All current parish members and regular worshippers will receive membership forms in the post in mid-December, so as to ensure that all are financial in time for the AGM on Sunday 15.2.2009. A covering letter will explain parish membership and the associated privileges and responsibilities. ~ Some important dates in 2009: Meatfare Sunday: 22.2.2009; Forgiveness Sunday: 1.3.2009; Palm Sunday 12.4.2009 (Roman Catholic Easter falls on this day in 2009); Pascha: 19.4.2008.

Note: We will have a midnight service on Pascha this year, but no service on Palm Sunday.

THE NATIVITY FAST

Friday November 28th was the first day of the Nativity Fast, the period of spiritual preparation that we observe over the 6 weeks prior to the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or Christmas. 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 - in 2008 - on December 4th, 8th, 18th, 19th, 22nd, and 25th. Wine and oil are permitted on fish days, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and also on December 10th, 17th, and 26th. 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. The fast becomes much stricter from the beginning of January onwards. 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.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

Newly-reposed: Patriarch Alexis

Special needs: Mark and family, George and family

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

Expectant mothers: Elise

Newly-baptised: Daniel, Evdokia, Thomas Alexandru

Departed: 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), Elena (Yakupova)



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