

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК
PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 72, January 2008 ~

THE APPROACHING FEASTS OF THE NATIVITY AND THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

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

Festive Services:

6 January 2007 (Christmas Eve): Divine Liturgy commencing at 9.00am, followed by Vespers with 8 Old Testament readings

7 January 2007 (Christmas Day): Great Vespers at 6.00pm

Father James will be serving Divine Liturgy at Wallsend on Christmas Day

19 January 2007 (Theophany): Matins at 6.00pm

Father James will be serving at the Theophany Russian Orthodox Church in Mayfield (Newcastle) on this day

20 January 2007: (Afterfeast of Theophany): Divine Liturgy commencing at 9.00am, followed by the Great Blessing of Waters and the blessing of parish homes

House blessings on and after the feast of Theophany:

As usual, a list will be available in church for those wishing to indicate their interest in having their home blessed. At this stage, it is likely that homes in the north of the parish (Charmhaven, San Remo, Wyong) will be blessed on Saturday 19th in the afternoon; homes from Ourimbah to West Gosford and Kariong, and those on the Woy Woy peninsula, on the afternoon of Sunday 20th; and all others on Monday 21st.

PARISH LIFE IN DECEMBER

On the afternoon of Sunday December 9th a camp for young people commenced at Kincumber. An initiative of the Cabramatta parish many years ago, this annual camp has grown to be one that involves young people from Russian Orthodox parishes across Sydney and New South Wales, with some even coming from interstate! Although some young people from our parish have attended in the past, locals were this year only visitors! Father James visited with his children Sarah, Joseph and Nicholas on Tuesday

December 11th. At the request of Father Boris Ignatievsky, the rector of the Cabramatta parish, Father James gave a talk to the older children about the origins and beliefs of Protestant Christianity and ways in which the young people could respond to challenges to their Orthodox Christian faith.

The 40th day after the birth of baby Peter fell on December 11th, and so Father James read the appointed prayers for Matushka Marie and baby before Matins on the evening of Saturday December 15th. Matushka is now back singing with the choir once again.

In the last week of 2007, Father James and his daughters Sarah and Anna attended the Diocesan Youth Conference, with Chris Dowling also attending on one day. An article elsewhere in this newsletter gives more information about the conference.

At most services in December the Epistle has been read in both languages by Chris Dowling. George Karmadonoff remains our senior reader, and he will read in Slavonic on Sunday mornings whenever possible. Chris will read in Slavonic at weekday services and in George's absence, and has also taken on responsibility for reading the Epistle in English. Bill Reid will continue to read the service of the Sixth Hour (just before the beginning of Divine Liturgy) and the Lives of Saints whilst the clergy receive Holy Communion.

Our last service for 2007 was on Sunday December 30th, the day of commemoration of the Holy Forefathers. Although a fifth Sunday in that month, the service was not in English, Matushka Marie still needing to attend to a new baby far too much to be able to conduct the choir. Our regular choir sang on the day, and we were fortunate to have Deacon Constantine Moshegev and Subdeacon Martin Naef and their families visiting from Croydon. This was Father Constantine's first visit to our church.

In previous issues of this newsletter it had been reported that Subdeacon Martin would be ordained to the diaconate on December 25th 2007 in order to serve our parish and at Croydon. For various logistical reasons the ordination has been postponed until Saturday January 26th, 2008, and will take place at Croydon. God willing, Father James will be attending to represent our parish.

Parish Council will not be meeting during January 2008. A number of administrative projects are underway, however, with an inventory of church property, a new website, and a number of administrative guidelines expected to be completed by the beginning of February. The parish financial records will be audited this month in preparation for the Annual General Meeting in February. We also hope to receive our new vestments and other new church items from Russia this month.

CHURCH CLEANUP ON DECEMBER 22nd

On Saturday December 22nd a number of people gathered at the church in order to give it a good clean-up before the Christmas and Theophany services. The church was cleaned and prepared beautifully for the services ahead. After a morning of solid work those present shared a Lenten lunch prepared by Olga Petroff. Victor Bendevski was able to use the morning to install two large and much-needed shelves in the storage area upstairs from the kitchen, thereby providing space for the large containers in which our church vestments are stored. Many thanks to all who came and assisted!

2007-2008 NATIVITY EPISTLE OF HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH ALEXY II OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA to Hierarchs, Pastors, Monastics and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, Who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man?

Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks.

The angels offer Thee a hymn; the heavens a star; the Magi, gifts;

the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, its cave; the wilderness, the manger;

and we offer Thee a Virgin Mother. O God Who wast before the ages, have mercy upon us!

Sticheron on 'Lord, I have cried' at Vespers on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ

Dearly beloved in the Lord, Most Reverend Archpastors, all those in the priestly, diaconal and monastic ranks, pious laypeople - all faithful children of our Holy Orthodox Church!

We are now following the wise men of old, guided by the star of Bethlehem, to the manger of the divine Child - Our Lord Jesus Christ. We remember how the Magi 'rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh' (Matthew 2:10-11). As we come to the feast of the Nativity of Christ, we should ask ourselves: what can we bring to the manger which now receives Him Who cannot be contained?

He does not need our pride, neither our glory nor our material achievements. As dust in His sight are vain thoughts, earthly anxieties, all the attempts of people to exalt themselves above others. May our chief gift to the Saviour of the world, born of the Virgin, be strong and sincere faith - the faith, an example of which was given by the most pure Virgin Mary when she said to the Archangel who brought her the good news of the Incarnation: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word' (Luke 1:38). Today many people are accustomed to think that simply by the

exercise of their free and independent reason they can achieve happiness and rightly build their own personal lives and that of society as a whole. The Church, however, in the centuries of her existence, has many times seen how those who become proud and distance themselves from God in the end are unhappy and pitiable. On the other hand, the example of the Most Holy Mother of God shows the heights to which the person who gives himself wholly to the will of God can attain. 'The Virgin Mary', says St Ephrem the Syrian, 'is the daughter of the Light, since through her the Light illumined both the world and those dwelling therein'. May we with faith bring to the world the Light which is Our Lord Jesus Christ!

May another gift that we can bring to the manger of Bethlehem be love - warm and active love one for another and for all the people around us. Let us take these words of Christ as a guide for every day of our lives, 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another' (Jn 13, 35). Let us do works of love and mercy for the sake of those who today are alone and in difficult circumstances, who are suffering, who are in despondency and despair - such people are always with us.

The mutual love of parents and children, strengthened by love for God and their neighbours, has always been the foundation of strong Christian families. The coming year in our Motherland will be the 'Year of the Family', and in the many other countries where our Church serves God, concern for the family is likewise of the very greatest importance. It is absolutely necessary for us, as faithful children of the Church of Christ, to show such zealous concern. The whole of society and especially young people have once again to discover this simple and eternal truth: where there is no love, mutual responsibility, readiness to bring one's whole life as a gift to those whom one loves - there is neither happiness nor fullness of life. Divorces, abortions, striving for wealth and endless amusements, forgetting about one's own children, who so often are deprived of parental tenderness and a proper upbringing - all this turns the life of the individual and of the whole nation into a joyless existence, filled with the reproaches of conscience. If love were to reign in the family, together with faith, the joy of mutual dedication and support, then there would be many more happy people among us and the destiny of our nations would change for the better.

Dearly beloved, in the past year the Lord has blessed His Church with peace, joy and success in many works undertaken for the salvation of the people of God. On the feast of the Ascension of the Lord the fullness of unity was restored between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church outside of Russia, to which belongs a significant part of our church people, scattered throughout different countries of the world. Now we are once again one Church, strengthened by communion in prayer and Sacrament,

bearing witness to Holy Orthodoxy not only in our Motherland, but 'even unto the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

The holy relics of Saint Luke, the Apostle and Evangelist, were brought to the territory of our Church, as were those of Saint Spiridon of Tremithus and Saint John Chrysostom. The relics of the Right-believing Prince, Saint Alexander Nevsky, were taken from St Petersburg to Moscow, and thence to various towns linked historically to the earthly struggles of the heavenly protector of our Motherland. Very many faithful children of our Church came to our Orthodox churches to venerate these saints, pleasing to God, to receive from them spiritual comfort and blessings and healing of spiritual and physical illnesses.

The 600th anniversary of the repose of our Venerable Father Savvas of Storoyevsk, a disciple of Saint Sergius, an intercessor for pious Russian leaders and an instructor of monastics, was celebrated with the active participation of the Orthodox people. We prayed before the wonderworking 'Reigning' icon of the Mother of God on the 90th anniversary of its appearing, for a better future for Russia and for the correction of its historical path. The 90th anniversary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in our Holy Church was observed prayerfully and with due ceremony. A memorial cross dedicated to the memory of the many hundreds of New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, as well as the thousands and thousands of innocent people murdered during the years of the regime that was fighting against God, was brought from the monastery of Solovki to Moscow, to the Butovo range, where thousands of sufferers for faith and truth met a martyr's death. May God grant that the memory of their struggles may strengthen our people on the path of spiritual renewal!

During the past year, by the mercy of God, I was able frequently to celebrate divine services in the metropolitan city of Moscow and to visit the parishes and monasteries of the Moscow region. I also visited Valaam, where I consecrated a skete in honour of the Smolensk icon of the Mother of God. The Lord enabled me to visit our Church's dioceses of Vologda, Izhevsk and Korsun, and to witness to spiritual values and the social mission of Orthodoxy before the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. During meetings with State officials and people of different faiths and convictions I spoke about our faith, which enlightens and transfigures the world.

The peoples who are spiritually cared for by the Russian Orthodox Church are advancing steadily on the path of spiritual rebirth. On this path many successes have already been achieved. Life, however, also brings us difficulties, trials and temptations. In the past year there was more than one attempt to divide us on national, political or social lines.

The Church, which is always with her people in both their joys and their sorrows, always reminds them of this: only unity makes us strong, free, and able to transform the world. The conciliar unity of the people, from which neither Church nor State can separate itself, becomes for our society the foundation of all good action. We pray for this unity and we are trying to strengthen it.

Let us keep holy also the unity of our Church, the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). At the present radiant feast we recognise, with all the depths of our hearts and of our understanding, that it is precisely to unity that the Lord Who was born for us at Bethlehem calls us. 'How much good', writes Saint Basil the Great, 'has the Incarnation of the Saviour brought us; for human nature, divided and scattered into thousands of pieces, according to its strength is again brought into unity, both with itself and with God'.

Most Reverend Archpastors, dear fathers, brothers and sisters, I congratulate all of you with the feast of the Nativity of Christ and with the coming New Year. May the light of the star of Bethlehem always illumine our souls, giving us strength to follow the path of Christ Himself. May He give us health, peace and spiritual strength and lead us on the difficult paths of this life. May the coming year of the grace of Our Lord be for the Holy Church and for the people of our country peaceful, constructive and fruitful.

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (1 Thessalonians 5:28).

+ALEXY

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

The Nativity of Christ, 2007-2008
Moscow

NOTE: Copies of Archbishop Hilarion's Nativity Epistle in Russian and in English are included as inserts to this Newsletter.

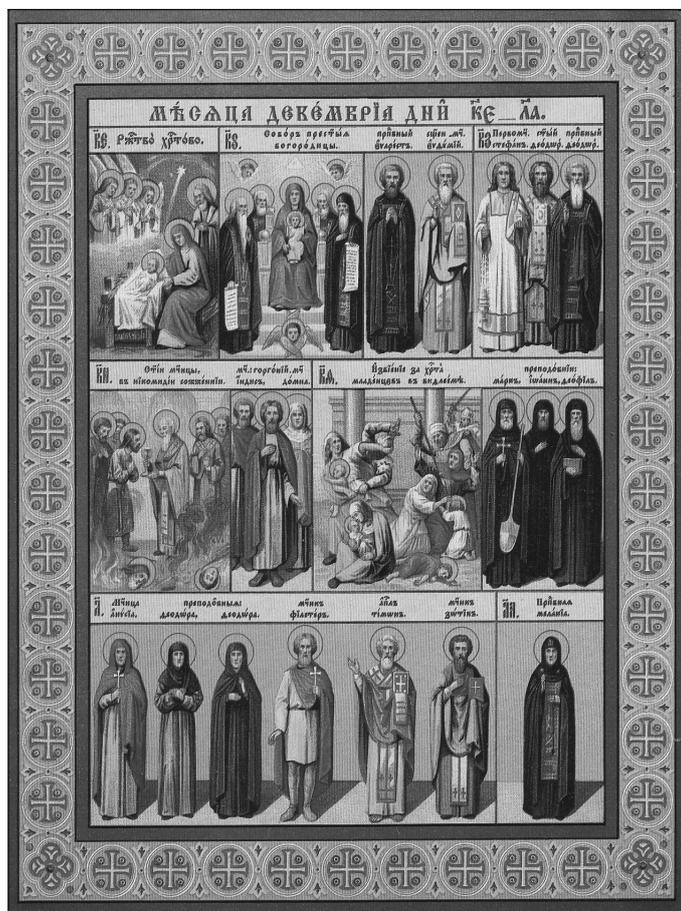
43rd ANNUAL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX YOUTH CONFERENCE

This year's Russian Orthodox Youth Conference - the 43rd annual conference - was held at the Crosslands Conference Centre in Galston, not far from Hornsby in Sydney's north. The guest speaker was Hieromonk James (Corazza), a clergyman from San Francisco. Lectures were given by Hieromonk James from San Francisco; Archpriest Gabriel Makarov from Brisbane; Archpriest Nicholas Karipoff from Melbourne; Varia Karipoff, a young woman from Melbourne researching drug and alcohol use in the Russian community; Nadia Crittenden, an Orthodox Christian psychologist from Wollongong;

Deacon Constantine Moshegev from Croydon; Rev. Dr Sergei Shirokov of the Centre for Mission Studies in Moscow; and Father James from Gosford. Father James' lecture built on some of the material earlier presented to the Children's camp. Titled "Orthodoxy and Contemporary Christianity", in it he discussed how Orthodoxy could be defended from attacks on it by other Christians and how Orthodoxy could respond to contemporary challenges. The text of most lectures should be posted online at www.rocoryouth.net in the near future.

As in previous years, the conference was a good opportunity for young Russian Orthodox people (14 years and older) from around Australia and New Zealand to meet, form friendships, share ideas, and learn more about their faith. It also gave a number of the clergy an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual pastoral concern. God willing, next year's conference will be in Brisbane.

ORTHODOX LIFE: EXPLANATION OF AN ICON FREQUENTLY PLACED IN THE CENTRE OF THE CHURCH



It is common in this parish to find a certain icon often placed in the centre of the church for veneration, an example of which is given here. One can find the same icon in a number of other Russian Orthodox parishes in the Sydney region: Strathfield, Croydon, Cabramatta, and Fairfield, to name a few. Although it appears to many to be the same icon, the image displayed is in fact one of a set of 52 icons, each one depicting the saints or historical events commemorated in a given week. This icon is placed in the centre of the church if the church does not have a suitable icon of the saint or feast commemorated on a particular day, with the relevant icon moved to the front. The sets used in our parishes were originally produced before the Russian Revolution, and so do not depict those saints glorified during the 20th Century (like Saint

Seraphim of Sarov, or Saint John of Kronstadt. We have ordered a new, updated set from Russia, one that we expect will arrive this month. As the Slavonic text makes it hard for many to read and recognise which saint is which, it would perhaps be helpful if we used some sort of indicator to show the saint being commemorated. The example shown depicts the feast days and saints commemorated between December 25th and 31st, beginning with the Nativity of Christ, or Christmas.

IMPORTANT DATES IN 2008

Meatfare Sunday/Мясопустная: March 2nd

Cheesfare or Forgiveness Sunday/Сыропустная: Прощеное воскресенье: March 9th

Palm Sunday/Вербное Воскресенье: April 20th

Great & Holy Friday/Великая Пятница: April 25th (coincides with the Anzac Day holiday)

Pascha/Пасха: April 27th

Pentecost/Троица: June 15th

OUR 5TH ANNUAL FISHING COMPETITION

As has been previously advised, our 5th Annual Fishing Competition competition will be held on Saturday February 9th at the Deerubben Reserve on the Hawkesbury River. The parish website has now been updated with lots of fishing competition information, all of which can be accessed at [www.gosfordrussianchurch.org.au/fishing comp](http://www.gosfordrussianchurch.org.au/fishing%20comp). Questions can also be directed to the organisers of the two events: Paul Pereboeff (0414-950741), Victor Bendeovski (0410-327635), George Karmadonoff, Peter Iliuk and Craig Koppman.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

Ioanna, Anatoly and family

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

Preparing for ordination: Subdeacon Martin Naef, who is now to be ordained to the diaconate on 26.1.2008 and appointed to serve here in Gosford

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



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