

# CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## BULLETIN OF MARCH 2, 2008



### Please Remember in Prayer

Carole Boris and Jane Koshutko who are undergoing treatment. If you have a prayer request, please let Fr. John know.

### The Great Fast / The Rite of Forgiveness

Great Lent begins this year on Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup>. As we know, the Sunday before the Great Fast is called Forgiveness Sunday, for on this day we ask each other's forgiveness, remembering that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. Let us take this God-given opportunity to start afresh with the Lord, each other, our families and friends, and even our enemies. May the Lord grant us this holy desire!



### SUNDAY, MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup>

#### SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

8:40a.m. Hours  
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy  
Coffee Hour  
Choir Practice  
11:00a.m. Baptism of Allen Maxim

### SATURDAY, MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>

6:00p.m. Vespers

### SUNDAY, MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>

#### FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

8:40a.m. Hours  
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy  
Rite of Forgiveness  
Coffee Hour  
7:00p.m. **First Lenten Service**  
Vespers

### Choir Practice

There will be a practice following the coffee hour today, Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> for those who can make it. We will look at music for the Lenten season, Holy Week, and Pascha. All choir members, and those interested in joining the choir, are asked to try and attend.

### Monthly Calendars

for March and April are available for pickup in the back of the church. These calendars show the schedule of services and classes offered during Great Lent. As a reminder, please consult the Sunday bulletin for changes to the schedule. If you have any doubt concerning the time of a service, please call the church.



### The Baptism of Baby Allen Maxim

has been scheduled for Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 11:00am. All are invited to attend. Allen is the son of Maxim and Svetelena Oganyan.

### Looking Ahead:

- ❖ March 2<sup>nd</sup> – Last day for meat
- ❖ March 9<sup>th</sup> – Last day for dairy
- ❖ March 10<sup>th</sup> – Great Fast Begins
- ❖ April 27<sup>th</sup> – Pascha

### Special Coffee Hour

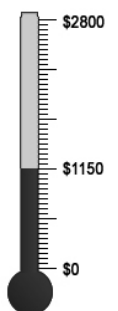
Please join us for a special coffee hour today to welcome babies Alexander Parsells and Allen Maxim Oganyan. There will be a light lunch served.

### Church Fundraiser: Kielbasa

On March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, our parish will be making kielbasa for sale this Pascha. If you would like to help work or if you would like to place an order, please see either Kathy Parrish or Diane Evanusa.

### Update on Parish Wish List

Our new festal icons and liturgical covers have been entirely donated. We also have received \$1150 towards our baptismal font which is estimated at \$2800. The font that we have been using is on loan from New Jersey. If you would like to make a donation please see either Fr. John or Susan Pappas, our treasurer.



### READER SCHEDULE

#### Sunday, Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>

Hours: Kathy Parrish  
Epistle: Kathy Parrish

#### Sunday, Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>

Hours: Jen Alexion  
Epistle: Jen Alexion





## GENERAL RULES OF FASTING FOR THE GREAT AND HOLY LENT

*Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat.*

*Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion.*

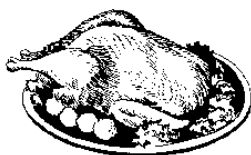
The Orthodox idea of fasting is first of all that of an ascetical effort. It is the effort to subdue the physical, the fleshly man to the spiritual one, the "natural" to the "supernatural." Limitations in food are instrumental; they are not ends in themselves. Fasting thus is but a means of reaching a spiritual goal and, therefore, an integral part of a wide spiritual effort. Fasting, in the Orthodox understanding, includes more than abstinence from certain types of food. It implies prayer, silence, an internal disposition of mind, an attempt to be charitable, kind, and - in one word - spiritual. "Brethren, while fasting bodily, let us also fast spiritually..."

And because of this the Orthodox doctrine of fasting excludes the evaluation of fasting in terms of a "maximum" or "minimum." Every one must find his or her maximum, weigh his or her conscience and find in it his or her "pattern of fasting." But this pattern must necessarily include the spiritual as well as the "bodily" elements. The Typikon and the canons of the Church give the description of an ideal fast: no meat, no dairy products, total abstinence on certain days. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:12). But whatever is our measure - our fasting must be a total effort of our total being.

Keeping this in mind we should fast in order to achieve the goal of prayer, repentance, and forgiveness. To fast means abstaining not only from certain foods, but most importantly from passions, bad habits, overindulgence, rudeness and selfishness. It means also that we should abstain from everything that might take the focus of our life away from the spiritual effort. Among these things are every kind of entertainment, such as going to the movies, watching TV or going on spring vacations. For married couples it will also imply abstaining from intimacy.

The fundamental meaning of the fasting effort is to discover the true values of our life, to discover that we live not for our own sake but in the context of our relationship with each other and with the living God. So we fast not in terms of our individual piety but by linking our life with that of the Church. In essence, fasting is an exercise in being faithful: to each other in observing the same rules and sharing in the same hardship, and to our Lord Himself Who has given us fasting as a school of love.

*By Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann*



Meat is not permitted on any day.



Dairy is not permitted on any day.



Wine and oil are permitted on weekends, and on a few other days (see your wall calendar)



Fish is permitted only on the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>) and on Palm Sunday.

## NO GRAVEN IMAGE: ICONS AND THEIR PROPER USE – PART ONE OF TWO

By Fr. Jack N. Sparks, Ph.D.

The first time I invited a particular Protestant friend to step inside an Orthodox Church, he looked around very slowly, carefully, cautiously. "It's pretty," he said, "but doesn't the Bible warn against graven images?"

His reference, of course, was to the icons, painted images of Jesus Christ and His followers who, through the centuries of our history as the Church, have been portrayed for all to see. Was he right in his concern?

That particular Church, like most Orthodox Churches, was very beautiful. And the Bible, specifically the Old Testament law, does say, "Thou shalt have no graven images" (Exodus 20:4, KJV). So, the question is, do those icons, those paintings portraying Christ, His Mother, the saints, and special biblical events, come under the category of graven images?

The history of icons and of their use in the Orthodox Church is not only fascinating but instructive. They are no new thing. Nor were they invented by an apostate medieval Church. The use of representations for instruction and as aids to piety goes back to the earliest centuries of the Church, and likely they were there in some form from the very beginning. Certainly we know that even in legal-minded Israel, paintings and other artistic representations used to help the people remember spiritual truth were not at all unknown. In both the tabernacle and the later temples there were images used, especially of the cherubim. And a recently unearthed syna-gogue of the last few centuries before Christ has paintings of biblical scenes on its walls.

### The Biblical Parameters

But was this done contrary to the command of God? Look at Exodus 26:1. In God's commands to Moses concerning the tabernacle, given just a few chapters after the giving of the Ten Commandments, is this instruction: "Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains woven of fine linen thread, and blue and purple and scarlet

yarn; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them."

A similar command with respect to the Ark of the Covenant instructed Moses to have two cherubim of hammered gold at the ends of the mercy seat. God said, "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel" (Exodus 25:22). Here are images directly connected with the presence of God, and commanded by Him.

From the very earliest years of the Church, Christians used such symbols as the cross, the fish, the peacock, the shepherd, and the dove. And early

Christian tombs and catacombs bear paintings which are representations of biblical scenes. For example, the fourth century Church historian Eusebius tells us that outside the house of the woman in the Gospels with a hemorrhage cured by Christ was "a bronze statue of a woman, resting on one knee



and resembling a suppliant with arms outstretched. Facing this was another of the same material, an upright figure of a man with a double cloak draped neatly over his shoulders and his hand stretched out to the woman." Eusebius goes on to say, "This statue, which was said to resemble the features of Jesus, was still there in my own time, so that I saw it with my own eyes" (Church History, Book 7, Chapter 18). He tells us further that portraits of the Savior and of Peter and Paul had been preserved, and that he had examined these with his own eyes as well.

In that very same century the famous bishop and theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, tells of being deeply moved by an icon of the sacrifice of Isaac: "I have seen a painted representation of this passion, and have never passed by without shedding tears, for art brings the story vividly to the eyes." His friend and contemporary, Saint Gregory Nazian-

*Continued on page 4...*

**No Graven Image** continued from page 3...

zen, writes of the persecution of Christians by the cruel Emperor Julian the Apostate: "The images venerated in public places still bear scars of that plague." The witness of many other great early Church writers bears out the same truth. Icons were known and venerated in the earliest centuries of the Church.

All right. So the early Church made and possessed images—or icons, as we call them in a transliteration of the Greek word for images. And the Christian faithful honored or venerated them. But does this fit with the biblical warning concerning images?

The command in question is from the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:3-5).

Note that the context shows that the term "graven image" is used to refer to an idol—an image created to be worshiped as a god. Could this mean there are in the Bible two classifications of image—true images and false images? Appropriate images and inappropriate images? If so, how do we distinguish between them?

### **Icons and Our Faith in God**

To answer these questions, let us review for a moment what we believe about God Himself. The venerable eighth-century theologian, Saint John of Damascus—a champion for the cause of icons and for Orthodox Christianity—summarizes very well what true Christians in his day believed about God. See if you don't agree.

"I believe in one God, the source of all things, without beginning, uncreated, immortal and unassailable, eternal, everlasting, incomprehensible, bodiless, invisible, uncircumscribed, without form. I believe in one superessential Being, one Godhead greater than our conception of divinity, in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and I adore Him alone. I worship one God, one Godhead, but I adore three persons: God the Father, God the Son made flesh, and God the Holy Spirit, one God" (On the Divine Images, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980, page 15).

Nothing could be more sound, more biblical, more Christian, more Orthodox. But given our understanding of the Godhead, if God is invisible,

standing of the Godhead, if God is invisible, as Saint John writes, how can we possibly depict God?

Listen once again to Saint John of Damascus: "It is obvious that when you contemplate God becoming man, then you may depict Him clothed in human form. When the invisible One becomes visible to flesh, you may then draw His likeness. When He who is bodiless and without form, immeasurable in the boundlessness of His own nature, existing in the form of God, empties Himself and takes the form of a servant in substance and in stature and is found in a body of flesh, then you may draw His image and show it to anyone willing to gaze upon it" (On the Divine Images, page 18).

The old Chinese adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words," comes to mind. If we use word-pictures to illustrate our sermons, what about graphic pictures to illustrate the gospel of Christ itself? This is Saint John's plea: "Depict His wonderful condescension, His birth from the Virgin, His baptism in the Jordan, His transfiguration on Tabor, His sufferings which have freed us from passion, His death, His miracles which are signs of His divine nature, since through divine power He worked them in the flesh. Show His saving cross, the tomb, the resurrection, the ascension into the heavens. Use every kind of drawing, word, or color" (On the Divine Images, page 18).

Absolutely! Right on target! It is incredibly important that we Christians be allowed the latitude to depict Christ's humanity and work, because by His incarnation He revealed Himself in and through material creation. And material creation thus sanctified must be allowed to reveal Him.

*Part Two in next week's bulletin...*

### **LENTEN RETREAT**

#### **"HOLY WEEK – Our Journey to Pascha"**

**Retreat Speakers:** VRev. Paul Lazor, John and Paraskeva Skvir Lecturer in Practical Theology, SVS

**Date:** Saturday, 12 April 2008,

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM; Great Vespers at 6:00 PM

**Where:** Saint Andrew Orthodox Church  
2028 East Lombard Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21231

**Registration:** \$5.00 begins at 12:30 PM

**To register:** Please email: James Magruder at [jlmagruder@verizon.net](mailto:jlmagruder@verizon.net) or call church office 410-276-3422 not later than 6 April 2008.