

CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF FEBRUARY 11, 2007



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT MEAT-FARE SUNDAY

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour
Question / Answer

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH

7:00p.m. Bible Study

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH

6:00p.m. Vespers; Confessions

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

CHEESE-FARE SUNDAY

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



Meat-Fare Sunday

is the last day we partake of meat products until Pascha, April 8th.

"Cheese Week"

is the week before Great Lent, during which we are permitted to eat dairy products (but not meat) on any day of the week, including Wednesday and Friday.

Cheese-Fare Sunday

is the last day we partake of dairy products until Pascha, April 8th.



Church Readers Urgently Sought

If you have any experience at all reading in church, or would like to learn, please speak with Fr. John. This important ministry brings much reward and is urgently needed in our parish. All are welcome: men, women, and children!

Bible Study: Meeting of our Lord

On Tuesday, February 13th, from 7:00-8:30pm, a Bible Study will be held at the church to look at the event of our Lord's presentation in the Temple when He was forty days old. All are welcome and encouraged to attend! Bring a Bible and a friend!

The Season of the Great and Holy Fast

begins on Sunday, February 18th, at 7:00p.m. with the Vespers service and concludes with the celebration of Pascha, April 8th. As we know, during this season of repentance we are called to much more than a mere dietary change; we are called to change our entire way of life so that it conforms to the ways of God. And for this reason we not only cease those things which are spiritually harmful (arguing, gossiping, overeating, judging others, etc.) but we also limit those things which bring no spiritual benefit (television, radio, magazines, etc.). In their stead we apply ourselves to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving: attending more church services, helping to those in need, spending more time in spiritual reading and reflection, and reforming bad habits. There is no greater opportunity to spiritually "get back on track" than the Great Fast—let us not waste it!



The Rite of Forgiveness

will be served immediately following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, February 18th. On this day before the beginning of the Great Fast, 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 forgive and forget those things which separate us, so that we can travel the road of Lent, not as individuals, but together, as brothers and sisters returning to our Father's House.



FROM THE DIARY OF A RUSSIAN PRIEST



Life is a precious and unique gift, and we squander it foolishly and carelessly, forgetful of its brevity. Either we look back with yearning on the past or else we live in the expectation of the

future in which, it seems to us, life will be better; whereas the present – that is, our life as it actually is – is wasted on these fruitless dreams and regrets.



Our lack of compassion, hardness of heart, and mercilessness towards others from an impenetrable curtain between ourselves and God. It is as if we had covered a plant with a black hood, and then complained because it died from lack of sunlight.



Sin lies in yielding to evil thoughts, not in having them. We are never free from these thoughts, for such is our nature, obscured by sin; even the saints had evil thoughts. Our voluntary yielding to evil thoughts or our struggle against them – herein lies our defeat or our victory.

Fr. Alexander Elchaninov, one of the most gifted priests in the Russian emigration, died from a tragic illness in 1934 at the age of fifty-three.

THE SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

By Bishop Kallistos Ware

Gospel reading: Matthew 25:31-46

The past two Sundays spoke to us of God's patience and limitless compassion, of His readiness to accept every sinner who returns to Him. On this third Sunday, we are powerfully reminded of a complementary truth: no one is so patient and so merciful as God, but even He does not forgive those who do not repent. The God of love is also a God of righteousness, and when Christ comes again in glory, He will come as our judge. "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). Such is the message of Lent to each of us: turn back while there is still time, repent before the End comes. In the words of the Great Canon:



The end draws near, my soul, the end draws near;
Yet you do not care or make ready.
The time grows short, rise up: the Judge is at the door.
The days of our life pass swiftly, as a dream, as a flower.

This Sunday sets before us the "eschatological" dimension of Lent: the Great Fast is a preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior, for the eternal Passover in the Age to Come. (This is a theme that will be taken up in the first three days of Holy Week.) Nor is the judgment merely in the future. Here and now, each day and each hour, in hardening our hearts towards others and in failing to respond to the opportunities we are given to help them, we are already passing judgment on ourselves.



ESTABLISHING GOOD HABITS

It is heartening when we in the 21st century find that contemporary experts discover, using scientific methods, what the Church has known and practiced all along. One such recent discovery is that it takes about six weeks, or forty days, to make a certain practice into a habit. The period of forty days has since Old Testament times been that amount of time necessary to prepare for something significant or purge oneself of something negative. Today, the Church invites us to a forty-day fast twice a year: once before the Nativity of our Lord and the other before our Lord's Passion and Resurrection.

Keep in mind, that when we speak of habits, we may either mean something good or something

bad. In the case of the Christian life, we are often speaking of replacing bad habits with good ones. This process is called repentance, since the bad or sinful habits lead to death and away from God, whereas the good habits or virtues lead to God and eternal life.

We often emphasize changing our ways at the beginning of the New Year or during one of the prolonged fast periods of the Church, but any time is a good time to begin forming a good habit. In fact, the best time to root out the bad and institute the good is always in the present moment. "Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2)

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step 1: realize the problem

Motivation is an essential element for a person to be successful at instituting a new and virtuous habit. We must realize that not all is right in our lives; something needs to change. Once we realize what that something is then we become increasingly sensitive to it, until we become motivated enough to want to do something positive about it. This is the moment when we are most ripe for change. For example, the Prodigal Son was wasting away his life in a foreign land with his father's money, thinking everything was great. It wasn't until life got ugly and uncomfortable that this lost son began to realize something was wrong. He looked around him, seeing the mud, the husks and the swine, and he began to remember his former life with his family. His nakedness, hunger and loneliness in contrast to his former life of bliss and fulfillment brought him to his senses. He had a moment of realization that he needed to change, to get up out of the mud and return to his father with a humble, contrite and repentant heart. This is the first step toward developing a good habit.

step 2: firmly desire change

The second step is to realize that change does not happen without struggle and effort. Sometimes that struggle is the adjustment of our schedule or lifestyle to incorporate whatever habit we are trying to establish. We should also realize that there are forces working against our efforts towards the good and virtuous. The holy Fathers of the Church have typically listed three such negative forces. First, we must contend against our own sinful inclinations and passions, our weaknesses of the flesh and our mortality. Secondly, we must be aware of the Evil One and his demons, who ceaselessly wage spiritual war against us and our noble purposes. Finally, we must remember that we live in a fallen world whose values oppose those of God. To forget any of these aspects of the spiritual war and not be willing and ready to struggle against them with the help of God is to not be serious in our goal of establishing a good habit.

Continually keeping our motivation fresh in our minds can help us overcome the forces against us. For example, if the habit we are trying to form is to be more diligent in saying our daily prayers, perhaps a helpful thought is to remember how beneficial these prayers are in keeping us in communication with God. As Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain put it, it is vital for the spiritual soldier to

remain in communication with his "base." If we firmly keep our goal before us, it will help us to remain committed to our purpose.

A third principle to keep in mind in establishing a good and virtuous habit is that much force of will and effort will be necessary, especially at the beginning. This good beginning is vital to sustain our effort. St. John of Sinai, the author of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, taught: To lag in the fight at the very outset of the struggle and thereby to furnish a token of our coming slaughter is a very hateful and dangerous thing. A firm beginning will certainly be useful for us when we later grow slack. A soul that is strong at first, but then relaxes, is spurred on by the memory of its former zeal. And in this way new wings are often obtained.

It is important to remember that we may be either fighting against momentum in the wrong direction or are faced with no momentum at all, but inertia. Either way, physics provides the principle that teaches us that much force and energy are required to move our hearts, minds and bodies in the right direction.

step 3: act with resolve

Finally, the last step is to put our good intentions into action. This should go without saying, but unfortunately it is where we most often fall short. We need to actually begin the process of repentance and establish whatever virtue or good practice we are trying to make into a habit. Most people have good intentions, but not all have active prayer lives, healthy bodies, organized finances or clean homes. The first three steps are important to understand and keep in mind during the struggle, but ultimately all is naught if we do not move from contemplation to action. Furthermore, it is vitally important to remember that an action not sustained profits us nothing. How many health clubs grow rich on people who take initial action and join their clubs, but do not sustain their use of their membership for longer than a couple of weeks.

remember: have realistic expectations and seek god's help

There is no substitute for self-discipline when it comes to forming good habits. Having a realistic expectation of the resistance that we will face, will help us to set up the correct routine and stick with it. If we run with patience the race that is set before us, God will give us the strength and grace to continue.

From an anonymous source.

GOD'S COFFEE

From an anonymous source

Recently a friend sent me an email that grabbed my attention. It was about a group of college alumni, well-established in their careers, who began talking at a reunion about the impact that a professor of theirs had made on each of their lives. They decided to go visit their old professor, who was now retired. During their visit their conversation turned into complaining about the stress in their work and lives.



Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups - porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite - telling them to help themselves to the coffee.

When all the alumni had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said, "Notice that each of you took one of the nicer-looking cups. You didn't take any of the plain ones. While it is normal for you to want the best for yourselves, that has become the source of your problems and stress. The cup itself adds nothing to the quality to the coffee. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups...and then you began eyeing each other's cups. You compared the quality of your cup with the quality of a friend's cup."



The professor continued, "Now consider this: Life is the coffee; your job, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life. The style

of cup one has does not define or change the quality of life an individual lives. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee God has provided us. The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything."

Here is the lesson for today: God brews the coffee, not the cups. Enjoy your coffee! Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly. Joyfully give thanks to the Father. Spend time with God...over coffee.

"Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father." (Col 1:11-12a)

FROM MERE CHRISTIANITY

By C. S. Lewis

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

VIRTUES OF THE CHRISTIAN

Saint Nikolai Velimirovich

Almsgiving: "When you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But when you do merciful deeds, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, so that your merciful deeds may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret Himself shall reward you openly. (Matthew 6:2-4)

Loving your enemies: "I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45) There is no other way to cooperate with Christ our establish peace.

Forgiveness: If your brother trespasses against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4) Try to experience the joy of forgiving.

Responding to duties: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's." (Matthew 22:21) It means, to render to the worldly authorities the worldly tributes and to God the spiritual tributes. As the image of Caesar is on the money, so the image of God is on the soul.

