



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF MARCH 9, 2008

Please Remember in Prayer

Carole Boris who is undergoing treatment. If you have a prayer request, please let Fr. John know.



SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

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

MONDAY, MARCH 10TH

- 7:00p.m. Canon of St. Andrew

TUESDAY, MARCH 11TH

- 7:00p.m. Canon of St. Andrew

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12TH

- 7:00p.m. Canon of St. Andrew

THURSDAY, MARCH 13TH

- 7:00p.m. Canon of St. Andrew

The Great Fast

begins tonight with the first Lenten Vespers at 7:00pm. As we know, from this service until Pascha we are called to much more than simply a change in diet – we are called to a change in lifestyle. And it is this change of lifestyle which allows us to more fully experience Christ’s resurrection within us. However, Great Lent is not just a personal journey to newness of life – it is a journey that the people of God make together. This is why we not only limit our personal activities and entertainments so we can increase our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving but we also come together more frequently as a community, taking advantage of the extra services and educational opportunities afforded to us. In this way we receive strength for the struggle, not only from the Lord but also from each other. As your priest and fellow struggler, I ask you to make that extra effort to participate in the Lenten services, if not for your own benefit then at least to help your brothers and sisters in Christ.



The Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete

is one of the most beautiful and powerful services of the Lenten season, and will be served Monday through Thursday this week at 7:00pm. In this service, only about 50 minutes long, St. Andrew wonderfully weaves our own personal story of sinfulness and restoration in Christ with the accounts of the sinful and righteous of the Old and New Testaments, giving us greater awareness of not only the history of salvation for the people of God, but also greater insight into how we must participate in the writing of our own personal salvation history. This is one of the most important services of Great Lent.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14TH

- 7:00p.m. Memorial w/ kolyva

SATURDAY, MARCH 15TH

ST. THEODORE SATURDAY

- 6:00p.m. Vespers

SUNDAY, MARCH 16TH

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

- 8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy

Coffee Hour

READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Mar. 16th

- Hours: Jen Alexion
Epistle: Jen Alexion



Sunday, Mar. 23rd

- Hours: Sandy St. Germain
Epistle: Sandy St. Germain

Date Changed: Kielbasa Fundraiser

The new work date for the Kielbasa Fundraiser is March 23. If you would like to help work or if you would like to place an order, please see either Kathy Parrish, Bob Dodge, or Diane Evanusa.



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

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

Suppose you saw me kneeling before an array of icons of the scenes Saint John described, praying to Christ—perhaps even kissing those icons. What then? Am I engaged in the worship of idols?

For here, you see, is where we come across the crucial reason for having icons in the first place. In the image we see the Prototype. An icon of Christ reveals to us the Original. And through Him, He taught us, we also glimpse the Father. Icons become for us windows to heaven, revealing the glory of God. The fact is, icons help to protect us from idolatry! Thus, we bow before the icon of Christ, seeing through it Him and His Father.

These icons, these windows, may be seen as offering movement in two directions. In an Orthodox Church the icons are for us who worship a passage into the Kingdom of God, but they also bring a revelation, a manifestation of the unseen heavenly host of angels, saints, and martyrs—yes, even the eternal saving events—into our presence. The Church becomes a true outpost of heaven on earth.

This veneration, by the way, is accompanied by rich scriptural precedent. Saint John of Damascus reminds us that: "Abraham bowed down to the sons of Hamor, men who had neither faith nor knowledge of God, when he bought the double cave intended to become a tomb. Jacob bowed to the ground before Esau, his brother, and also before the tip of his son Joseph's staff. He bowed down, but he did not adore. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Daniel bowed in veneration before an angel of God, but they did not adore him" (On the Divine Images, page 19).

Wisdom. In that perceptive statement lies a choice of words that makes all the difference in the world to Orthodox Christians when it comes to their use of icons. A major distinction is made between adoration or worship and honor or veneration. Worship is reserved only for God. Honor and veneration are a different matter entirely.

We all honor and venerate various objects, positions, and people—and that to differing degrees! Husbands and wives are told in the New Testament to honor each other. And likewise children honor (we hope!) their parents. At school we honor teachers and principals. We honor professors and scientists; governors and members of congress;

senators and judges; presidents and prime ministers. "Take a letter to the Honorable Mr. Jones," a man may say to his secretary.

The word "venerate" is less familiar today, perhaps because we do less venerating than earlier generations. The verb "to venerate" means to regard with reverential respect or with admiration. I asked my friend how he felt about the Bible. Did he feel any more respect for it than for any other book, say a dictionary or a novel? "Yes," he said emphatically, "the Bible is the word of God, so I respect it above any other book."

"Well, then," I asked, "would you say you venerate the Bible?" He thought it was a very strong word, but when it came right down to it, yes, he did venerate the Bible.

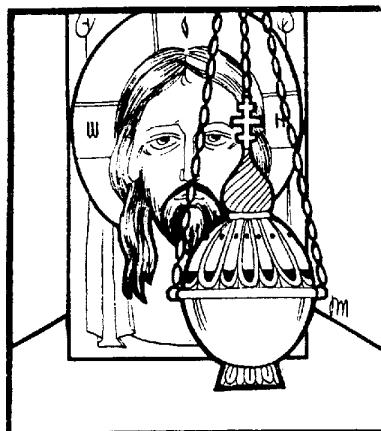
"What, then, about your pastor," I asked, "or some other very pious or spiritual person you know? Is there someone like that whom you venerate?"

There he wasn't sure. He did respect his pastor and some other Christians he knew, respected them very highly, but it seemed that "venerate" was a word too strong.

Even though we Americans are uneasy about veneration, many of us are still willing to venerate the Bible, and, yes, some even know what it is to venerate a wise and godly pastor or an aged grandparent. So indeed do Orthodox Christians venerate icons, honoring and respecting them for what they depict, for the story they tell, for what they reveal of heaven and of the glory of God.

"But wait," said my friend, "If you are going to worship God, why don't you just worship God?" Our discussion led to a consideration of what he would consider the ideal environment for worship: four blank, undecorated walls in a neutral but pleasant color, and a pulpit. Would such severe bareness serve to speak of the presence of a living God? Even bare walls are an image, speaking of absence and emptiness.

How one worships, you see, is a crucial concern for a Christian. And icons are central to Orthodox Christian worship. Not only do they help us to see the glory of God, but some icons, such as those of the saints, give us holy models to follow as patterns for our lives...



No Graven Image continued from page 2...

The Word Becomes Flesh

Orthodox worship is made up almost entirely of Scripture readings, prayers, and hymns. And the movements we make in connection with some of these readings, prayers, and hymns, are movements which turn our eyes and our attention to certain icons. This direction of our attention to the icons is central to the purpose of Orthodox Christian worship: to direct us to Christ, who directs us to the Father. This, after all, is why the Son and Word of God became incarnate. As He Himself said: "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me" (John 12:44, 45).

Jesus, the Son and Word of God, was made Man that we might be drawn to the Father, might see Him, might know Him. Becoming incarnate, He joined created matter, humanity, to Himself, uniting God and humanity in His Person that we might know the Father. In that very act He sanctified matter and used it, His very humanity, to unite us to God. In Christ, therefore, the uncreated was united to the created, creation to Creator, in order to bring us to God.

Thus, icons (along with the Scripture readings, prayers, and hymns) help us worship God, help us grow in the image and likeness of God. Though visible and material, their content, theology in color, helps us to see and know the invisible and spiritual...

Icons false images? Oh, no! For we do not picture the invisible, and we do not worship the icon. They are true images indeed, safely within the boundaries of the biblical tradition surrounding true worship. They engage the human eye in the worship and adoration of God. Saint John of Damascus summarizes the balance:

"I do not adore the creation rather than the Creator, but I adore the one who became a creature, who was formed as I was, who clothed Himself in creation without weakening or departing from His divinity, that He might raise our nature in glory and make us partakers of His divine nature..."

"Therefore I boldly draw an image of the invisible God, not as invisible, but as having become visible for our sakes by partaking of flesh and blood. I do not draw an image of the immortal Godhead, but I paint the image of God who became visible in the flesh..." (On the Divine Images, pages 15, 16).



The Whole Church Says "YES!"

In A.D. 787, the leadership of the entire Christian Church convened what is called the 7th Ecumenical Council. After a thorough and lengthy examination of the Holy Scriptures and a consideration of the tradition bearing on the making and use of icons, this body decreed:

"We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certainty and accuracy that just as the figure of the

precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy Churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, of the honorable Angels, of all Saints, and of all pious people.

"For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are people lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence, not indeed that true worship of faith which pertains alone to the divine nature; but to these, as to the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross and to the Book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious customs."

For the honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented. Thus, the icon is a true image, a window to heaven and a light which guides us there. In that sense it takes the same role as the pillar of fire which guided Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land and the star which led the Wise Men to Christ. The icon is not intended to serve as a photograph of an earthly scene. Nor does it merely awaken in us the sense of ages past. Rather, the icon is there to lead our hearts to the King of Kings, to the brilliant glory of the Age to Come.

The icon is a holy image, a door to heaven. It tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ and His great cloud of witnesses are present, on hand, on high, with us. Therefore, it is indispensable for those who sincerely pursue and desire the fullness of Christian worship.

THE BANDIT'S REPENTANCE

Can a sinner, in the space of ten days, make full repentance of his sins? By the immeasurable grace of God, he can. In the time of Emperor Maurice, there was a well-known bandit in the region around Constantinople. Both in the countryside and in the capital itself, he inspired fear and trembling. Then the Emperor himself sent him a cross, as a pledge that he would not punish him if he gave himself up.

The bandit took the cross, and did indeed give himself up. Arriving in Constantinople, he fell at the Emperor's feet and begged his forgiveness. The emperor kept his word, had mercy on him and let him go free.

Immediately after that, the bandit fell gravely ill and sensed that death was near. He began to repent bitterly of all his sins, and implored God with tears to forgive him as the Emperor had. He shed many tears in his prayer, so that the handkerchief with which he wiped them became soaked, and he died after ten days of prayerful weeping.

The night of his death, the doctor who had been attending to him had a strange vision in a dream: When the bandit on the bed breathed his last, a number of little black men gathered around him, flourishing bits of paper on which his sins were written, and two glorious angels also appeared. A pair of scales were placed in the middle, and the little black men gleefully put all the bits of paper on it, so their side of the scales was loaded, while the other was empty.

"What can we put in?" the angels asked each other. "Let's look for something good in his life." Then there appeared in the hand of one of the angels the handkerchief soaked with tears of repentance. The angels quickly placed it on their side of the scales, and it at once outweighed the other with all the papers. Then the little black men fled, howling in anguish, but the angels took the man's soul and carried it to Paradise, glorifying God's love for mankind.



ABOUT SAINT EPHREM'S PRAYER

The famous lenten prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian summarizes our entire struggle during the forty day fast – that of turning from vice to virtue, sin to holiness, and self-love to love of God and neighbor.

This powerful prayer is said every day of Great Lent, except on Saturdays and Sundays. It should be part of our morning and evening prayers, but may also be said at any other time throughout the day – especially in time of temptation.



THE PRAYER OF SAINT EPHREM

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. (*Prostration*)

But grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to thy servant. (*Prostration*)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen. (*Prostration*)

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner. (*12 times, with as many bows, and then again the whole prayer from the beginning to end, and after that one great prostration*)

Note: If one cannot make prostrations, then make bows, or simply the sign of the Cross.



THE FEAR FACTOR AND CONFESSION

From the Counsels of St. Theophan the Recluse

There are some people who fear Confession. But why? The priest is merely a witness, the Lord forgives the sins. It is He who commands the priest to give absolution to the person who confesses. It is the Lord who is merciful. He is just waiting for a person to confess his sins, and as soon as he does, the Lord immediately forgives him. What is there to fear from such a Lord?