

CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF MARCH 12, 2017

A Warm Welcome!

We welcome all of our visitors. It's good to have you with us!

The Parish Council Officers

At last Sunday's meeting of the 2017 Parish Council, the following elections were made: Nicholas Borodulia (Junior Warden) and Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones (Secretary). Deborah Wilson remains the Senior Warden and Barbara Kaloroumakis, Treasurer. May the Lord bless them!



The New Counter Schedule

has been posted on the bulletin board. Council members are asked to please note which Sunday they have been assigned to.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12TH

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

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

MONDAY, MARCH 13TH

7:00p.m. Vespers

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15TH

6:00p.m. Presanctified Liturgy

SATURDAY, MARCH 18TH

Memorial Saturday

5:00p.m. Memorial / Bible Study
 6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, MARCH 19TH

Sunday of Precious Cross

8:40a.m. Hours
 9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
 Coffee Hour
 Choir Practice

Sunday of Orthodoxy

Sincere appreciation is expressed to all those who stayed for and helped with last Sunday's celebration of the Triumph of Orthodoxy! Photos are available on the website for those who missed the festivities.



Potluck to Follow the 6:00pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgies

Those who wish to bring food are asked to please prepare a light lenten (no meat, dairy, or fish) dish or dessert. Questions? Please see, Nissa Nancy. Thank you!

Choir Practice for Pascha – Sunday, March 19th

There will a choir practice to prepare for Holy Week and Pascha on Sunday, March 19th. All choir members are asked to please reserve this day for this important practice.



Offerings: Did You Know?

- ❖ Offerings: 1) help the Church fulfill her work and 2) help us grow in Christ. Offerings are a matter of faith not just finances.
- ❖ The church's bank account is running low and we are in danger of not being able to pay next month's expenses. Help is needed.

Did You Know?

Geese fly in the V-formation because when each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in the V-formation, the whole flock can fly at least 71% further than if each bird flew on its own. Christians who share a common direction and sense of community can also get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust and uplift of one another. What a great image for Great Lent!



READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, Mar. 19th
 Joanne Patrick

Sunday, Mar. 26th
 Gabriela Vlahovici-Jones



CASH FLOWS THROUGH 2/28/17					CASH FLOWS IN MARCH 2017					FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT		
OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	OPERATING		OTHER		ALL	AS OF: 3/12		
Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Net	Available	Restricted	Savings
14,038	12,430	570	500	+1,679	2,933	8,222	0	0	-5,289	3,087	5,900	0

SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS, ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONICA

From the Prologue of Ochrid by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

Gregory's father was an eminent official at the court of Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus. The gifted Gregory, completing his secular studies, did not want to enter the service of the imperial court, but withdrew to the Holy Mountain and was tonsured a monk. He lived a life of asceticism in the Monastery of Vatopedi and the Great Lavra. He led the struggle against the heretic Barlaam and finally defeated him. He was consecrated as Metropolitan of Thessalonica in the year 1347. He is glorified as an ascetic, a theologian, a hierarch and a miracle-worker. The Most-holy Theotokos, St. John the Theologian, St. Demetrius, St. Anthony the Great, St. John Chrysostom and angels of God appeared to him at different times. He governed the Church in Thessalonica for thirteen years, of which he spent one year in slavery under the Saracens in Asia. He entered peacefully into rest in the year 1360, and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ. His relics repose in Thessalonica, where a beautiful church is dedicated to him.



St. Gregory Palamas learned much through heavenly revelations. After he had spent three years in stillness in a cell of the Great Lavra, it was necessary for him to go out among men and benefit them with his accumulated knowledge and experience. God revealed this necessity to him through an extraordinary vision: One day, as though in a light sleep, Gregory saw himself holding a vessel in his hand full to overflowing with milk. Gradually, the milk turned into wine which likewise spilled over the rim, and drenched his hands and garments. Then a radiant youth appeared and said: "Why would you not give others of this wonderful drink that you are wasting so carelessly, or are you not aware that this is the gift of God's grace?" To this Gregory replied: "But if there is no one in our time who feels the need for such a drink, to whom shall I give it?" Then the youth said: "Whether there are some or whether there are none thirsty for such a drink, you are obligated to fulfill your debt and not neglect the gift of God." Gregory interpreted the milk as the common knowledge (of the masses) of moral life and conduct, and the wine as dogmatic teaching.

The second time Gregory secluded himself in a monastery he was writing his Principles of Orthodoxy. On the eve of the Feast of St. Anthony the Great, the monks summoned him to the all-night vigil service, but he remained at his work in the cell while all the brethren went to church. St. Anthony suddenly appeared to him and said: "Perfect stillness is good, but sometimes it is necessary to be with the brethren." Convinced by this revelation, Gregory immediately went into church to the joy of all the monks.



PLANT YOUR GARDEN TODAY!

Anyone who works in the garden knows the importance of putting good seed into the ground because as the saying goes we shall reap what we sow. It is the same with the human heart – what goes into the soil of the human heart will ultimately grow and sprout forth, manifesting itself in our words and actions. The following is a recipe for a Christian heart which by the grace of God will bear much fruit!

1. FIRST, PLANT THREE ROWS OF PEAS
 - ❖ Patience
 - ❖ Promptness
 - ❖ Prayer
2. NEXT, PLANT THREE ROWS OF SQUASH
 - ❖ SQUASH gossip
 - ❖ SQUASH indifference
 - ❖ SQUASH criticism
3. THEN, PLANT FOUR ROWS OF LETTUCE
 - ❖ LET US obey the Lord
 - ❖ LET US be loyal
 - ❖ LET US be true to our obligations
 - ❖ LET US be unselfish
4. FINISH WITH FOUR ROWS OF TURNIP
 - ❖ TURN UP when needed
 - ❖ TURN UP with a smile
 - ❖ TURN UP with a vision
 - ❖ TURN UP with determination

Plant your garden today, remembering the Apostle Paul's words, "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully." (2 Cor. 9:6)

ASK FATHER: 3 QUESTIONS / 3 ANSWERS

Question: Why does Christ say that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable? The commentary I've read from the Fathers says that God can forgive this sin too. Is this a contradiction?

Answer: Although this looks like a contradiction, it is actually just two different perspectives, complementary ones in fact; like two sides of the same coin.

All sins, including blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, can be forgiven by God in that He loves everyone unconditionally, truly and eternally. It is His very nature to love and forgive, and this will never change, no matter what we do – the Cross being the supreme sign of this. Even though we rejected Him, putting Him to death on the Cross, He still overcame all of this hatred by His divine love. This is why when speaking about God's side of the equation; the Fathers say that even this sin is forgivable. Yet, on the human side, forgiveness (God's love) can only be received by a willing and repentant heart. This is why blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, from a human perspective, can never be forgiven because this sin is the conscious rejection of God and His love and forgiveness.

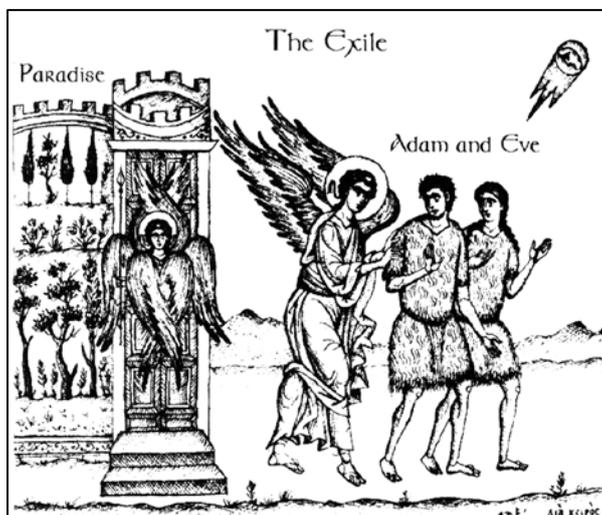
Without this seeming contradiction, we would be forced to deny either 1) the supreme love of God by saying that God will not forgive us if we do or say such a thing, or 2) man's free will, his God-given ability to accept or reject love, which is the determining factor in our relationship with God. In fact, it is these two things, God's love and man's free will, which make for Heaven or Hell. God offers His love to all of mankind. Those who receive and return this love, experience His presence as Paradise and Heaven. Those who reject this love, experience His presence as Hades and Hell.

Question: What is the difference between Paradise and Hades, and between Heaven and Hell? Are there any people in Heaven or Hell now? What about Elijah the Prophet?

Answer: While sometimes these terms are used interchangeable, when a distinction is made the terms are used as follows:

Hades and Paradise are the terms often used to describe the condition of the soul when it is separated from the body through biological death. Hades describes a negative condition, where the soul is tormented by its sinful relationship with God and its neighbor, and thus fearfully awaits the general resurrection and final Judgment. Paradise describes a positive condition, where the soul is comforted by its healthy relationship with God and its neighbor, and thus peacefully anticipates the bodily resurrection and final Judgment.

Heaven and Hell are the words usually used to describe man's condition after the bodily resurrection. The joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell exceed those of Paradise and Hades because in this final state, the body too experiences God's presence, and like the soul has either a positive or negative reaction to Him.



Paradise and Hades are experienced only by the soul, and therefore are considered incomplete and temporal realities in comparison to Heaven and Hell which are experienced by the soul and body for all eternity.

Christ reigns in Heaven, accompanied by His Mother, who He granted bodily resurrection to after her physical death. All others await the general resurrection. Elijah was carried up "as if into heaven". Although it is unclear exactly what this means, it is the understanding of the Church that this expression describes something other than bodily entering into Heaven.



Question: How did Christ through the Cross and Resurrection effect Hades and Paradise?

Answer: Before Christ's Descent into Hades, when people died, they all went to Hades – the region of the dead. To the degree that they sinned, they suffered torment. To the degree that they were righteous, they received comfort. It was much like how the conscience can inflict torment or offer consolation to us in this life. Although the righteous still went to Hades, since they too had fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), they did receive comfort through their God-pleasing lives and their hope for deliverance through Christ. Because of this they were said to dwell in Abraham's bosom, which is referenced by our Lord Himself in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The Father's see in the great chasm between the rich man and Lazarus not so much a description of physical geography but rather one of spiritual disposition (ie. distance or closeness to God and one's neighbor).

When Christ descended into Hades, He offered relief from spiritual torment and complete forgiveness of sins to every-

one, sinners and righteous alike, just like He had done on earth. Those who accepted the invitation entered into Paradise – the state of joyful and peaceful communion with God.

It is important to note that Paradise had been opened to man through Christ's work; not because He changed God the Father, as some incorrectly believe, but rather because He changed us, drawing all men to Himself by being lifted up on the Cross, changing the world by the revelation of His divine love, the glory which He shared with the Father before the world was. This love, glory, life, light, power, wisdom, etc., had been revealed to mankind at the fullness of time – the time when mankind was sufficiently prepared to repent and return to the Father.

In Christ and through the Holy Spirit, man is able to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Lord, dying to the old ways of selfishness and living in self-sacrificial love, returning to the Father, the Source of Life. In and through God, he is able to truly love, fulfilling the new commandment given by Christ, to love one another as He Himself loves us – that is to love self-sacrificially even to the point of death. "No greater

love can a man have than this to lay down His life..." (John 15:13).

Through the work of Christ, "we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:16)

Formerly, Hades had held men captive because through sin they had lost communion with God and were bereft of His life-giving power, His self-sacrificial divine love. In this state, they could not fully repent of their sin, like suffering patients unable to heal themselves because they lacked not only the means for healing but even the full and perfect desire for it.

Now, through Christ, the means for the healing of soul and body are available, and man is gifted, through the unutterable groans of the Holy Spirit to truly desire full repentance and salvation.

Hades now exists as a reality only for those who, through blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, reject the selfless love of God. The gates have been broken and everyone is free to leave the torment of selfishness, unless of course they or we want to remain in it. God forbid!

