

The Diocese of the West
The Orthodox Church in America

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St. Susanna Orthodox Church

August 2009

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Pastor:

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You won the honor of victory over nature by bearing God, pure virgin; yet like your Son and creator, in a manner beyond nature you submitted to its laws. Therefore, dying, you rose to live eternally with your Son and our God.

—Troparion, first Canticle, Canon for the Dormition

In August

On Saturday, August 1, we begin the Dormition Fast. We will celebrate the Feast of the Dormition of the Most-holy Theotokos on Saturday, August 15, ending the fast. The beautiful icon of The Dormition is set over the inside of the main door of our Church—and we can indeed venerate it with a simple crossing of one's self and a deep bow (as it is lofted out of reach of a kiss). Within the Dormition Fast, on Thursday, August 6, we will celebrate the great feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So it is that, while we all will pass from this life just as the Theotokos did, so all the faithful will arise into the glory that Christ showed His disciples when He was Transfigured on Mount Tabor.

A Somewhat un-Summerlike Summer—But “Be of Good Cheer”

For many of our brothers and sisters in the flesh, this has been an economically brutal summer. It has not been the traditional time of leisure and vacations, but rather a time of looking for work, worrying over bills and anxiously defending against what the future could possibly bring. Just as God warned Israel against political alliances, so, we too, have found that political solutions—though necessary—are invariably flawed. The only true answer is God. No matter the disaster, He helps us to endure—for He understands our situation. Christ told us, in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in

Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

What does this mean, this “overcoming?” Quite simply, Christ has made available for us triumph on our behalf. Let's pause to examine the situation. Just as mankind has suffered from setbacks and tragedies throughout the ages, human resiliency has depended on one thing: real meaning, not delusion, and not illusion. We cannot suffer and yet endure, without meaning. Form has to have content or it is empty, just as Andy Warhol's soup-can silkscreens were created as empty art mirroring the emptiness and alienation of modern secular philosophy, suffering without meaning also mirrors the emptiness of life without God; it leaves the sufferer with no foundation upon which to stand. This leads to bitterness, and fills the sufferer with that most deadly poison, despair.

We know from Scripture and Tradition that Satan is the prince of this world—and he hates us, and wishes us to perish, and does everything he can to destroy us. One of his chief weapons is despair. Despair is insidious: a person gives up hope, sees no value in life, gives in to the fallen passions, sins to block his/her spiritual suffering (having rejected God), and keeps on sinning. The unfortunate one then falls into deeper despair upon realizing that the sinful garbage he or she has been using to self-medicate is even more meaningless than his/her original

*Corner of Jamestown Rd.
& Robinwood Ln.
(2 blocks north of
Racetrack Rd.)

(continued on page 2)

suffering. That person has every chance of passing from this life in terrible delusion, estranged from life, love, and ultimately, God. It is unfortunately the position that many face, given a society that increasingly teaches the young that Christianity is outmoded.

On the other hand, as Christians, we also know from Scripture and Tradition that a facet of the content of our lives on earth is that we must “endure,” as Paul says. The word “endure” does not connote a joy ride, but, rather an ordeal that has all sorts of aspects. We see in the Scriptures instances of rejoicing and instances of great suffering. Bear in mind that it is not God Who makes us suffer, but, rather, the interaction of our own free will with the free will of our brethren (in the human race), some of which is highly influenced by the prince of this world, who is none other than Satan. Now Satan is identified in Scripture and Tradition, variously as “the father of lies,” “that old murderer,” “the enemy,” “the destroyer,” and so on and so forth. Not a friendly personage!

A major problem is that Satan is also known as “Lucifer,” the angel of light, and was created as the most beautiful of God’s angelic creatures—hence, he is the master of ways to tempt us image-conscious humans. He can even tempt us to curse God when we face difficulty and tragedy. Cursing God when we face evil times is the very same as shooting our General in the midst of a battle; by doing so, we eliminate our most important source of help and reinforcement.

And—a battle it is. The famous spiritual treatise, “Unseen Warfare,” names it, and another spiritual classic, “The Arena,” puts it even more clearly into focus. We are in an age that is heavily influenced by materialistic philosophy, which says that the only reality is that which our basic five senses (sometimes with the aid of technology) can apprehend. Therefore, “There ain’t no devil.” Paradoxically, many hang on to God because humans have a comfort zone that needs a cushion. Unfortunately, that is as far as that conception of God goes on most days. In this mode, God also inherits all the bad stuff, since “the devil does not exist,” so “It’s God’s fault.” This is one of the most successful ploys of the enemy—framing our most powerful ally for the works of an enemy that has successfully hidden himself. This is a veritable assembly line of despair, producing seductive, empty temptations, removing our true source of hope, and hiding the actual perpetrator deep within our own “the world is what I make of it” pride.

So the content upon which we stand through all the trials (and joys) that comes our way is this: Christ has won the victory, but we on earth are responsible for joining in that victory. We are in the midst of a prolonged battle, the prizes of which are our very souls. We must carry on no matter what, and this “carrying on” consists of being loving, forgiving, forbearing, and turning to God with our burdens and sorrows as well as our joys. Prayer and the sacraments of the Church—especially Communion and Confession, which go hand-in-hand—are extremely important. We must give and love as much as we possibly can, even in the worst of times. This giving occurs on more than one level, be it spiritual, emotional, material; by the Holy Spirit, we will know when and where to give and what to give. All of these things are the substance of spiritual life on earth—the alternatives being selfishness, delusion, hatred of our brothers and sisters in the flesh, tyranny and all manner of similar despair-producing behaviors.

This true content, this substance is born of our knowledge that Christ has overcome the world; He has overcome even the very worst the world can offer. We understand that this world is not what it should be, and its ruler is false. This world and this false principality is but a dim speck compared to what God offers His faithful—the strength and expectation of final redress of all wrongs, and life as life is meant to be, in the world (eternity) within which THIS earth of ours exists. What the enemy takes from us, we must ascribe to the enemy, and not become like him—for that is what he wants: to fill our souls with his disease. Rather, and whether we are suffering or exalting, we must take on the characteristics of our General, our Leader, our God and Lord Jesus Christ. This way, we truly join in Christ’s triumph, and we do not give victory to the one who causes our misery, but add to his defeat. The more steadfast we are in our Christian practice, the more we feel Our Lord’s victory ourselves.

A Glimpse at September

On Tuesday, Sept. 1, we will have a Great Vespers to celebrate “the Indiction,” or Church New Year. The Church New Year is a renewal in the life of the Church, and, according to Church tradition, it echoes Christ’s proclamation of His mission on Earth: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; because He has

(continued on page 4)

Liturgical Schedule for August, 2009

Note: The Bible Study featuring the Commentary of St. John Chrysostom will take place every Saturday at 4:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

- Saturday, Aug. 1** **Dormition Fast Begins (Also, Lesser Feast of the Procession of the Holy Cross)**
6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Aug. 2** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 1:10–18 and Matthew 14:14–22
Note: The Parish Council Meeting will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Tuesday, Aug. 5** 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers w/ Litya for **The Transfiguration of Our Lord**
- Thursday, Aug. 6** 6:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **The Transfiguration of Our Lord**
Scripture Readings—2 Peter 1:10–19 and Matthew 17:1–9
- Saturday, Aug. 8** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Aug. 9** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 3:9–17 and Matthew 14:22–34
Note: A potluck luncheon will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Friday, Aug. 14** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers w/Litya for **The Dormition of the Most-holy Theotokos and End of the Dormition Fast**
- Saturday, Aug. 15** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **The Dormition of the Most-holy Theotokos**
Scripture Readings—Romans 15:30–33 and Matthew 17:24–18:4
- Saturday, Aug. 15** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Aug. 16** 9:00 a.m.—**Divine Liturgy and Blessing for Children Beginning a New School Year**
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 4:9–16 and Matthew 17:14–23
- Saturday, Aug. 22** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Aug. 23** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 9:2–12 and Matthew 18:23–35
Note: A potluck luncheon will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Saturday, Aug. 29** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Aug. 30** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 15:1–11 and Matthew 19:16–26

St. Susanna Cleaning Team Schedule

*Blessed are those who love the beauty
of God's house*

Team 1—August 15th; 9:00 a.m.

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Rachel Reed	August 12
Fr. Tom Renfree	August 20
Alex Teshin	August 24

Namesdays:

Alex Jacobs	August 12
Marita Sevick	August 15
Natalie Teshin	August 26
Alex Teshin	August 30

Anniversaries:

Layne & Jan Williams	August 24
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anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...” (Luke 4:16–22). Originally, an “indiction” was an imposition of Roman taxes. Hence, the Lord is placing His requirement on our time—in order to free us, ultimately, from all constraints and deathly effects of time by His gift of eternal life.

A week later, we will celebrate the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Most-holy Theotokos on Tuesday, Sept. 8. Then, on Monday, Sept. 14, we will celebrate the Exaltation of the Precious Cross.

Glory to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Fr. Andrew

Etiquette: When Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ are Ill or in Need

As we work on getting a “new and improved” prayer tree formed, it seems like the perfect time to remind

everyone of the proper etiquette for prayer tree phone calls. When you receive the phone call from either Jan or Rebecca it is simply a call to let you know that prayer is needed. That means take a little time from your day and remember that person and their family in your prayers. I know that it may seem like a good time to call them or show up at the hospital, but it is best to give them time and space to heal with their immediate family and friends. What they really need at that time from us is prayer...lots of prayer.

The prayer tree is to help our church family in a time of need, to remind us to come together in prayer. If you need an update or have questions or concerns regarding the prayer request please call Rebecca or Jan—not the individual in need of prayer. If you feel you should show some support in addition to prayer, send a note or a card! Thank you all for your support, encouragement and love towards everyone in a time of need.

In Christ,
Rebecca Teshin



Prayer List

PLEASE JOIN US IN GIVING THANKS TO GOD:

- For the skill and devotion of those beautifying our temple and gardens.
- For the beauty of the Mother Lode, and for the privilege we have been given to live here.
- That the Holy Mother of Jesus continues to care for the unborn.
- That many of our petitions are being answered.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR GOD’S HELP:

- “St. John, please intercede for us before God for the membership growth of St. Susanna.”
- That St. Susanna Mission may receive a Church Planting Grant.
- For repose of the souls of our service men and women who have given their lives for the people of foreign lands.
- To safeguard all the troops who remain in heathen lands.
- To help us forgive the heathen fanatics who continue to murder our soldiers and their own citizens and children.
- That many may come to Orthodoxy through our witness and example.
- To bless our monasteries and the men and women who dwell in them.
- For the well-being of Matushka Anna and her family.
- For health and welfare for Ann, Fr. John, and Elisa.
- For Natasha’s success in securing a permanent art teaching position.
- For the healing and comfort for Donna and Ann.
- For health for Shay.

To ask us to pray for you, your family or friends, please call Alex Teshin at 209-536-9999.