

The Diocese of the West
The Orthodox Church in America

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St. Susanna Orthodox Church

March 2009

www.stsusanna.com



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Let us begin the fast with joy! Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts! Let us cleanse our soul and cleanse our flesh! Let us abstain from every passion as we abstain from food! Let us rejoice in virtues of the Spirit and fulfill them in love, that we all may see the Passion of Christ our God, and rejoice in spirit at the holy Pascha!

—Seventh “Lord I Call Upon Thee” Sticheron of Forgiveness Sunday Vespers

This Month’s Liturgical Calendar

Once again, our Liturgical Calendar takes us all the way through Great Lent to Pascha. This is so that all of us can plan ahead in this most complex of Church seasons. For parishes, Great Lent offers more weekly services than any other season, and Pascha is most truly the bright center of our worship life. The Liturgical Calendar included with this month’s Bulletin gives us all an idea of what we hope to do from this moment on through Pascha in our local Church. Some of this may change—of which you would be informed in the Liturgical calendar for April. This “complete picture” of Lenten and Paschal liturgical practice is for the sake of planning our daily lives during the Lenten and Paschal seasons, so that we better coordinate our liturgical and daily lives without “surprises.”

An Invitation From a Good Friend of St. Susanna Mission

Fr. Jon Maguleas, Pastor of The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Modesto has invited us to participate in the Annunciation Parish Feast day, with Great Vespers at 7:00 p.m. (followed by a fellowship dinner) on Tuesday, March 24. His Eminence, Metropolitan Gerasimos of the Greek Orthodox San Francisco Archdiocese, will preside at the service. There will also be a Divine Liturgy on Wednesday, March 25 at 10:00 a.m. (Orthros at 9:00 a.m.)

for those who wish to attend. Fr. Jon and our own Metropolitan Jonah (when he was simply “Father Jonah”) planted the seeds for our St. Susannah Orthodox Mission, and tenderly helped this parish to set down solid roots. Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church is located at 313 Tokay Avenue, in Modesto. Directions to the church will be given out after our Divine Liturgy on the Sunday preceding this feast day.

Great Lent through Pascha

Yes, we have seen the following list before. But be of good cheer! It has been shortened (by number of words, at least). The following suggestions on having a fruitful Lent have been gleaned from various Church Fathers of the ancient to the comparatively recent period.

I. Do not allow personal controversies and/or disturbing headlines to inflame your wrath or fear. Respond to adversity—especially that proclaimed by the media, with Discernment. Discernment is that quality which considers the source, and comprehends “the facts, and nothing but the facts,” without loading the situation with overblown passion. Remember, to discern is not to judge others, but to view a situation with prudence. Trust in Christ, and remember that He has overcome the world.

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

(continued on back)

II. List your prevailing (or “favorite”) sins, and study them. Self-examination is the basis of confession, and the basis of that Christian humility which underlies true piety. Think of all the things you can do to cut each temptation off before you toy with them in your mind, and become, in firemen’s terms, “Fully Involved,” like a house engulfed in flames.

III. Determine a Fast that will help you, and that will not become in itself the center of your attention. The Fast is an aid to help us turn ourselves more fully toward spiritual things. The Lenten Fast is fairly rigorous and may need some tempering for your state of health, or experience in fasting (and other factors). Your pastor can advise you as to a suitable level of fasting for you. Most importantly, Great Lent is that season which is meant to give us a spiritual attitude that we can strive for throughout the year. Like a honeymoon, which gives us that attitude toward our spouse which we seek to achieve throughout married life, Great Lent gives us an attitude toward God that we can carry throughout our Christian walk. No, you needn’t fast 365 days a year, but, rather, keep the attitude of putting our appetites within the parameters of our spiritual understanding. Our spiritual understanding should lead the body, not the other way around.

IV. Enhance the penitential aspect of your prayer rule. Emphasize prayer for God’s mercy—not only for yourself, but also for everyone for whom you have responsibility, a primary relationship, or have strong feelings about, or even have just noticed on the street—for better or worse. In fact, do indeed pray for the beleaguered people of countries suffering drought, war, civil unrest or unrelenting poverty. Perhaps most of all, pray that God grant you yourself humility. This is a double-edged sword of course, because Scripture and Tradition have always shown that God’s people have always gained spiritual strength—and God’s favor—through humility. Humility is also the basis of Christian love.

V. Be wary of feeling proud of your progress in spiritual practice. “With great pride cometh a fall.” Just at that moment when you are feeling especially good, some guy cuts you off in traffic, or the suddenly attractive stranger crosses your path; or the annoying alms-seeker breaks in on your daydream of greatness, or those kids of ours just won’t let us alone—and why can’t so-and-so stop breathing so loud in church? Such times are good times to consider Point Number One, above. And, Point Number Two—the list of our most-common sins—will also come in handy.

VI. Keep your liturgical life sharp. Attend as many services as are practical. The services are for the nourishment of your soul. There are a lot of services in Great Lent, and while you are not expected to attend them all, you should attend as many as you can. Confession is also highly important to keep yourself on track. Those little times of “missing the mark” can build into a big weight to carry around, and seriously distract you from those good things you need to do, and really want to do. Keep your prayer life active, and repent often. As Lent is especially focused on contrition and repentance, this is where the opposition is most likely to interfere. If you stumble in anything, repent of it, confess, get back on your feet and walk the walk! St. Paul said that the Christian life on Earth is a marathon, not a sprint.

VII. Replace those comfort items that you plan to do without during Lent, with edifying reading and actions. You will find that, by the end of Lent, your perspective has indeed become more God-centered, and your Discernment has sharpened considerably. Read good, godly books; clergy or knowledgeable Orthodox friends can recommend books if you don’t already have something in mind. Engage in more charity—monetary or otherwise, such as volunteering, or simply being ready to lend a sympathetic ear to another person’s troubles.

May we all keep our eyes on the goal, and have a fruitful Great Lent!

In Christ,
Fr. Andrew

Liturgical Schedule: Great Lent Through Pascha

- Saturday, Feb. 28** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**
- Sunday, March 1** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**
Following Divine Liturgy—Forgiveness Vespers
Scripture—Romans 13:11–14:4 and Matthew 6:14–21

Monday, March 2, 2009—Beginning of Great Lent

- Wed., March 4** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, March 7** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, March 8** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Sunday of Orthodoxy**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 11:24–12:2 and John 1:43–51
Following Divine Liturgy—Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers
- Wed., March 11** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, March 14** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **St. Gregory Palamas Sunday**
- Sunday, March 15** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. Gregory Palamas Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 1:10–2:3 and Mark 2:1–12
Note: A sumptuous (but meatless) potluck luncheon—and following that, a Parish Council meeting—will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Wed., March 18** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, March 21** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers w/Litya for **the Veneration of the Precious Cross**
- Sunday, March 22** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **the Veneration of the Precious Cross**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 4:14–5:6 and Mark 8:34–9:1
- Tuesday, March 24** 7:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **the Annunciation at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Modesto** (*see the front page of this Newsletter for more information*)
- Wed., March 25** 6:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **the Annunciation**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 2:11–18 and Luke 1:24–38
- Saturday, March 28** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **St. John Climacus Sunday**
- Sunday, March 29** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. John Climacus Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 6:13–20 and Mark 9:17–31

April, 2009

- Thursday, April 2** 6:00 p.m.—**The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete with the Reading of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt**
- Saturday, April 4** 6:00 p.m.—**Great Vespers for St. Mary of Egypt Sunday**
- Sunday, April 5** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. Mary of Egypt Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 9:11–14 and Mark 10:32–45
Note: A Lenten potluck luncheon (and following that, the Parish Council meeting) will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Wed., April 8** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner

Holy Week

- Saturday, April 11** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers w/Litya for **Palm Sunday**
- Sunday, April 12** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Palm Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Philippians 4:4–9 and John 12:1–18
- Holy Mon., April 13** 6:00 p.m.—**Bridegroom Matins**
- Holy Wed., April 15** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Holy Thur., April 16** 6:00 p.m.—**Matins w/Passion Gospels**
- Holy Fri., April 17** 9:00 a.m.—**Royal Hours**
3:00 p.m.—**Vespers w/ Plaschanitsa procession**
6:00 p.m.—**Matins with Lamentations**
- Holy Sat., April 18** 9:00 a.m.—**Vespers and Liturgy of St. Basil**
11:30 p.m.—**Nocturnes**

And immediately after Nocturnes, we joyously celebrate:

- Pascha Sun., April 19** Midnight—**THE FEAST OF FEASTS: HOLY PASCHA!**
Matins, Paschal Hours and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, followed by the Paschal Feast
Scripture Readings—Acts 1:1–8 and John 1:1–17
1:00 p.m.—**Paschal Vespers**

Bright Week and Following

- Bright Wed., April 22** **Great Vespers w/Litya for Bright Wed.**
- Bright Sat., April 25** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers w/Litya for **St. Thomas Sunday**
- Antipascha Sunday, April 26** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. Thomas Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Acts 5:12–20 and John 20:19–31
- Saturday, May 2** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Holy Myrrhbearers Sunday**
- Sunday, May 3** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Holy Myrrhbearers Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Acts 6:1–7 and Mark 15:43–16:8

SEEING THE FACE OF GOD IN OUR FELLOW MAN

Reflection by Natalie Teshin

In parishes all over the world, membership can rise or fall just by the way a person perceives how they are being treated by a fellow parishioner. Some quit because someone commented on how they were dressed, another quits because someone didn't like their cooking, or someone objects to how they arrange their hair, or the person was not greeted properly, etc. Some even leave the parish because other members are "just plain annoying." The problem is that the one leaving is really the one who is not getting the Christian message of "Love one another as Christ loves the Church."

The Apostles Peter and Paul were great examples of two men who annoyed each other constantly, but who both accepted and loved one other and worked together in doing Christ's work on earth, however differently they believed it should be done. Nowhere in the Bible are we admonished to be less irritating to our fellow man, but rather, just the opposite—we are constantly reminded to accept each other, with all our faults, because we are all children of God.

Therefore, when we encounter pompous people (you know, the ones who know everything and don't mind reminding you several

times a day that they do), we should pray that humility will enter into their hearts soon. When we find people who grate on our nerves, let us pray that our nerves are strengthened, because we never know what, in that person's makeup, causes them to irritate us. What problems do other people face that we do not comprehend, that makes them act the way they do? What in our own makeup makes us unable to accept people for who they are? If we look for the face of God in those that God puts in our way, we might feel less likely to reject them, or be offended by them, or let our personal feelings get in the way of accepting such people as fellow children of God.

I feel blessed that I am a member of St. Susanna's. I have seen our members bend over backwards to be welcoming, accepting and forgiving. So, my friends, in this month of forgiveness, if I have offended any of you, I am sorry. When I forget a cleaning day or to bring something for Potluck, forgive me, I don't do it out of malice, just forgetfulness. I will also keep reminding myself to try to present myself as a child of God, while I look for Him in each and every face I encounter.

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.
- For Stacy's successful delivery of a healthy son.
- For Nadine's on-going successful therapy.

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 Iraq.
- 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 repose of the soul of Galina and comfort for her family. Memory Eternal!
- For the healing and comfort for Donna and Ann.

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

St. Susanna Cleaning Team Schedule

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

Team 1—March 21st; 9:00 a.m.

***Everyone to prepare for Pascha,
April 11th***

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Alisa Jacobs	March 14
Florence Craig	March 17
Natalie Teshin	March 17

Namesdays:

Dave Harmer	March 1
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Anniversaries:

Dave and Jeanne Harmer	March 3
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