

The Diocese of the West
The Orthodox Church in America

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St. Susanna Orthodox Church

February 2010

www.stsusanna.com



Pastor:

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*Adam was cast out from the sweetness of paradise, / when
with bitter desire he broke the commandment of the Master, /
and he was condemned to work the earth from which he himself
had been taken, / and then to eat his bread with much toil; /
therefore let us love abstinence, / that we may not weep out-
side of paradise as he did, // but enter into it.*

—Sessional Hymn, Tone Four of the Third Canticle of Forgiveness Sunday Matins

The Lenten Attitude

Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, will be celebrated by Orthodox Christians worldwide on April 4 this year. Preceding Holy Pascha is Great Lent, which begins on February 15 this year, and Holy Week, which begins on Palm Sunday, March 28th. While Pascha is a great and royal and radiant feast, and Holy Week is so powerful in its many depictions of Christ's path to the Cross, both are also occasions of great humility; for how can we be anything but humble in witnessing God's tremendous self-abasement for our sake, and even more so, when we understand what His Resurrection means for all of us. He presents us with the most earth-shaking choice that beings with free will could ever be offered.

And yet, humility is exactly what our Christian walk is all about, for humility simply means that we see ourselves in the right perspective; we see ourselves in the right relationship with God, and with the cosmos—the world we live in. St. Ephraim the Syrian said, "Man's repentance is God's celebration." Elsewhere it is also stated that legions of angels rejoice when even one sinner repents.

John the Baptist, "the greatest of those born of woman," the very Prophet who had the honor of proclaiming that Christ was at last present—on Earth, in the flesh—said that he was "not worthy to loose the latchet of His [Christ's] shoes." Humility is the understanding that, regardless of any special talents we may have, nothing makes us as individuals qualitatively superior to anyone

else in God's eyes. His judgment is the only judgment that ultimately matters; and while He has indicated that He does see us as individuals, yet He loves us all, and desires that all of us would live forever (in other words, that all of us would choose to accept His gift and live forever), and we should love one another, as fellow human beings—and act on that understanding.

Especially as we approach Great Lent, which impresses on us the classic formula of Christian piety—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—humility is essential. Great Lent begins on the Monday following Cheesefare/ Forgiveness Sunday, the very Sunday in which we give up the last of our "normal" diet and take on as much of the Lenten Fast as we can commit to; as well as participate in the Vespers of Forgiveness, in which we ask one another, individually, for forgiveness (and to give them our own forgiveness) for whatever sins we may have committed against each other.

As S.A. Bulgakov, in his *Handbook for Church Servers*, states, "On this Sunday the Holy Church focuses on the memory of the exile of our ancestral parents from paradise for disobedience and intemperance in order that, through misfortune, it more evidently emphasizes the importance of the presented ascetical effort for all, and in the loss of the blessedness of paradise it specifies a subject, worthy of repentance and tears. The example of the ancestral parents shows us the whole weight of sin and its fatal consequences and

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

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teaches us to avoid intemperance as the beginning and the source of sin, and to turn to repentance, as to the unique means of deliverance from the judgment of God.”

Finally, this humility is the basis of that high ascetical achievement which monastics call *nepsis*, or “joyous sobriety,” in which one’s entire being is at last unified, and centered on one’s true nature as a human being in communion with God. As Fathers such as Gregory Palamas describe it, this is the locus of mature Christian perception, when one both feels the strength of Christ within one’s being, and equally understands and shares the love of Christ for all of humanity—while having clear discernment regarding godly versus ungodly behavior. While one may love, one still has responsibility for one’s actions, and an understanding of the acceptability or unacceptability of others’ actions.

In other words, this Lenten humility can help us on our way to a greater understanding of who we are, and what God would have us do in this life, and where our true home lies. In other words, it is a gateway to heaven.

May you have a blessed and fruitful Lent!

In Christ,

Fr. Andrew

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 Natasha’s recovery.

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 healing of Matushka Anna.
- For health for Shay.
- For the healing of Bishop Nikolai.
- For health and strength for Ron and Judy.
- For Jack, who is dying, that he would acknowledge Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

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 2—February 20th; 9:00 a.m.

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Natalia Koshelkova February 4

Namesdays:

Leslie Hurst February 11

Anniversaries:

Mark & Marita Sevick February 4

Liturgical Schedule for February, 2010

The Molieben of Supplication for Church Growth will be served on Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m.

- Monday, Feb. 1** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers with Litya for the **Meeting of Christ in the Temple**
- Tuesday, Feb. 2** 6:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Meeting of Christ in the Temple**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 7:7–17 and Luke 2:22–40
Note: There will be a potluck following Divine Liturgy.
- Saturday, Feb. 6** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Meatfare Sunday**
- Sunday, Feb. 7** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Meatfare Sunday**
Scripture Readings—1 Corinthians 8:8–9:2 and Matthew 25:31–36
Note: There will be a Parish Council Meeting following Divine Liturgy.
- Saturday, Feb. 13** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**
- Sunday, Feb. 14** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday**
After Coffee Hour—Forgiveness Vespers
Scripture Readings—Romans 13:11–14:4 and Matthew 6:14–21
Note: There will be a potluck following Divine Liturgy.
- Monday, Feb. 15** *The Great Lenten Fast Begins*
- Wed., Feb. 17** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner.
- Saturday, Feb. 20** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers
- Sunday, Feb. 21** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **The Sunday of Orthodoxy**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 11:24–26, 32–12:2 and John 1:43–51
After Divine Liturgy, our parish is invited to Assumption Serbian Orthodox Church in Fair Oaks (near Sacramento) for Vespers of The Sunday of Orthodoxy at 7:00 p.m.
- Wed., Feb. 24** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner
- Saturday, Feb. 27** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for **Gregory Palamas Sunday**
- Sunday, Feb. 28** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Gregory Palamas Sunday**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 1:10–2:3 and Mark 2:1–12
Note: There will be a potluck following Divine Liturgy.

In March

- Wed., March 3** 6:00 p.m.—**Presanctified Liturgy** followed by a Lenten soup dinner.
- Saturday, March 6** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers w/Litya for the **Veneration of the Precious Cross**
- Sunday, March 7** 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
Note: There will be a Parish Council Meeting following Divine Liturgy.