



“КРАСНОЕ СОЛНЫШКО”

“SUNSHINE”

CHURCH BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH “ST. VLADIMIR”, HOUSTON

JULY, 2009



OUR PARISH’S PATRONAL FEAST - ST. VLADIMIR’S FEAST DAY

Will be celebrated on Sunday, August 2nd. on Sunday, August 2, 2009, at 1.00 p.m. right after the Divine Liturgy at the Parish House.

THE RECTOR OF ST. VLADIMIR RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH REVEREND FR. LUBOMIR, CHURCH COUNCIL AND SISTERHOOD INVITE ALL THE PARISHIONERS TO ATTEND ST. VLADIMIR’S DAY LUNCHEON.

Vespers will be served on Saturday evening at 5:00 p.m., and Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m.

**LET US OFFER OUR THANKS TO GOD FOR ALL HIS BLESSINGS UPON
OUR CHURCH!**



**EQUAL OF THE APOSTLES GREAT PRINCE ST. VLADIMIR,
IN HOLY BAPTISM BASIL,
THE ENLIGHTENER OF THE RUSSIAN LAND –
Commemorated on July 28th**

Few names in the annals of history can compare in significance with the name of St. Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus, who stands at the beginning of the spiritual destiny of the Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox people. Vladimir was the grandson of St Olga, and he was the son of Svyatoslav (+ 972). His mother, Malusha (+ 1001) was the daughter of Malk Liubechanin, whom historians identify with Mal, prince of the Drevlyani. Having subdued an uprising of the Drevlyani and conquered their cities, Princess Olga gave orders to execute Prince Mal for his attempt to marry her after he murdered her husband Igor, and she took to herself Mal's children, Dobrynya and Malusha. Dobrynya grew up to be a valiant brave warrior, endowed with a mind for state affairs, and he was later on an excellent help to his nephew Vladimir in matters of military and state administration.



Malusha became a Christian (together with Great Princess Olga at Constantinople), but she preserved in herself a bit of the mysterious darkness of the pagan Drevlyani forests. Thus she fell in love with the austere warrior Svyatoslav, who against the will of his mother Olga made her his wife. The enraged Olga, regarding as unseemly the marriage of her "housekeeper" and captive servant to her son Svyatoslav, heir to the Great Kiev principality, sent Malusha away to her own native region not far from Vybut. And there in about the year 960 was born the boy with the Russian pagan name Volodimir, meaning peaceful ruler, ruling with a special talent for peace.

In the year 970 Svyatoslav set out on a campaign from which he was fated not to return. He had divided the Russian Land among his three sons. At Kiev Yaropolk was prince; at Ovrucha, the center of the Drevlyani lands, was Oleg; at Novgorod was Vladimir. In his first years as prince, we see Vladimir as a fierce pagan. He headed a campaign, in which the whole of pagan Rus is sympathetic to him, against Yaropolk the Christian, or in any case, according to the chronicles, "having given great freedom to the Christians", on July 11, 978 he entered into Kiev, having become the "sole ruler" of the Kiev realm, "having subdued the surrounding lands, some by peaceful means, and the unsubmissive ones by the sword."

Though Vladimir indulged himself in a wild, sensuous life, he was far from the libertine that they sometimes portray him as being. He "shepherded his land with truth, valor and reason", as a good and diligent master, of necessity he extended and defended its boundaries by force of arms, and in returning from military campaigns, he made for his companions and for all Kiev liberal and merry feasts.

But the Lord prepared him for another task. Where sin increases, there, in the words of the Apostle, grace abounds (Rom. 5: 20). "And upon him came visitation of the Most High, and the All-Merciful eye of the Good God gazed upon him, and shone forth the thought in his heart, of understanding the vanity of idol delusion, and of appealing to the One God, Creator of all things both visible and invisible." The matter of accepting Baptism was facilitated through external circumstances. The Byzantine Empire was in upheaval under the blows of the mutinous regiments of Bardas Skliros and Bardas Phocas, each of whom sought to gain the imperial throne. In these difficult circumstances the emperors, the coregent brothers Basil the Bulgar-Slayer and Constantine, turned for help to Vladimir.

Events unfolded quickly. In August 987 Bardas Phocas proclaimed himself Emperor and moved against Constantinople, and in autumn of that same year the emissaries of Emperor Basil were at Kiev. "And having exhausted his (Basil's) wealth, it compelled him to enter into an alliance with the Emperor of the Russians. They were his enemies, but he besought their help," writes one of the Arab chronicles of events in the 980s. "And the Emperor of the Russians consented to this, and made common cause with him."

As a reward for his military help, Vladimir asked for the hand of the emperors' sister Anna, which for the Byzantines was an unheard of audacity. Princesses of the imperial lineage did not marry "barbarian" rulers, even if they were Christians. At the same time the emperor Otto the Great was seeking the hand of Anna for his son, and he was refused. However, in Vladimir's case Constantinople was obliged to consent.



An agreement was concluded, according to which Vladimir had to send the emperors six thousand Varangians, and to accept holy Baptism. Under these conditions he would receive the hand of the imperial daughter Anna. Thus in the strife of human events the will of God directed the entering of Rus into the grace-filled bosom of the Ecumenical Church. Great Prince Vladimir accepted Baptism and sent the military assistance to Byzantium. With the aid of the Russians, the mutineers were destroyed and Bardas Phocas killed.

Vladimir's emissaries, the commanders Oleg and Sjbern soon arrived in Constantinople for the imperial daughter. Eight days passed in Anna's preparation, during which time her brothers consoled her, stressing the significance of the opportunity before her: to enable the enlightening of the Russian realm and its lands, and to make them forever friends of the Byzantine realm. At Taurida St Vladimir awaited her, and to his titles there was added a new one: Caesar (Tsar). The haughty rulers of Constantinople had to accede also in this, to bestow upon their new brother-in-law the imperial insignia. In certain of the Greek historians, St Vladimir is termed from these times as a "mighty basileios-king", he coins money in the Byzantine style and is depicted on it with the symbols of imperial might: in imperial attire, and on his head the imperial crown, and in his right hand the scepter with cross.

Together with the empress Anna, there arrived for the Russian See Metropolitan Michael ordained by holy Patriarch Nicholas II Chrysoberges. He came with his retinue and clergy, and many holy relics and other holy things. In ancient Chersonessos, where each stone brings to mind St Andrew the First-Called, there took place the marriage-crowning of St Vladimir and Blessed Anna, both reminiscent and likewise affirming the oneness of the Gospel of Christ in Rus and in Byzantium. Korsun, the "empress's dowry", was returned to Byzantium. In the spring of 988 the Great Prince and his wife set out through the Crimea, Taman and the Azov lands, which had come into the complexion of his vast realm on the return trip to Kiev. Leading the princely cortege with frequent Services of Thanksgiving and incessant priestly singing they carried crosses, icons and holy relics. It seemed, that the Ecumenical Holy Church was moving into the spacious Russian land, and renewed in the font of Baptism, Holy Rus came forth to meet Christ and His Church.



Then followed an unforgettable and quite singular event in Russian history: the morning of the Baptism of the Kievans in the waters of the River Dneipr. On the evening before, St Vladimir declared throughout the city: "If anyone does not go into the river tomorrow, be they rich or poor, beggar or slave, that one shall be my enemy." The sacred wish of the holy Prince was fulfilled without a murmur:

"all our land glorified Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit at the same time."

It is difficult to overestimate the deep spiritual transformation of the Russian people effected by the prayers of St Vladimir, in every aspect of its life and world-view. In the pure Dneipran waters, as in a "bath of regeneration", there was realized a sacramental transfiguration of the Russian spiritual element, the spiritual birth of the nation, called by God to unforeseen deeds of Christian service to mankind.

"Then did the darkness of the idols begin to lift from us, and the dawn of Orthodoxy appears, and the Sun of the Gospel illumined our land." In memory of this sacred event, the regeneration of Rus by water and the Spirit, the Russian Church established the custom of an annual church procession "to the water" on August 1. Later, the Feast of the Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord, which Russia celebrated with the Greek Church, was combined with the Feast of the All-Merciful Savior and the Most Holy Theotokos (established by St Andrew Bogoliubsky in the year 1164). In this combination of feasts there is found a precise expression of the Russian theological consciousness, for which both Baptism and the Cross are inseparable.

Everywhere throughout Holy Rus, from the ancient cities to the far outposts, St Vladimir gave orders to destroy the pagan sanctuaries, to flog the idols, and in their place to clear land in the hilly woods for churches, in which altars would be consecrated for the Bloodless Sacrifice. Churches of God grew up along the face of the earth, at high elevated places, and at the bends of the rivers, along the ancient trail "from the Variangians to the Greeks" figuratively as road signs and lamps of national holiness. Concerning the famed church-building activity of St Vladimir, the Metropolitan of Kiev St Hilarion (author of the "Word on Law and Grace") exclaimed: "They demolished the pagan temples, and built up churches, they destroyed the idols and produced holy icons, the demons have fled, and the Cross has sanctified the cities."



From the early centuries of Christianity it was the custom to raise up churches upon the ruins of pagan sanctuaries or upon the blood of the holy martyrs. Following this practice, St Vladimir built the church of St Basil the Great upon a hill, where a sanctuary of Perun had been located, and he built the stone church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos (Desyatinnaya) on the place of the martyrdom of the holy Varangian Martyrs (July 12). The magnificent temple was intended to become the cathedral for the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus, and thus the primal altar of the Russian Church. It was built in five years, and was richly adorned with frescoes, crosses, icons and sacred vessels, brought from Korsun. The day of the consecration of the church of the Most Holy Theotokos, May 12 (in some manuscripts May 11), was ordered by St Vladimir to be inserted into the Church calendar as an annual celebration. This event was linked with other events celebrated on May 11, and it provided the new Church a twofold sense of continuity. Under this day in the calendar is noted the churchly Founding of Constantinople "dedicated by the holy emperor St Constantine as the new capital of the Roman Empire, the city of Constantine is dedicated to the Most Holy Theotokos (330). On this same day of May 11, the church of Sophia, the Wisdom of God was consecrated at Kiev (in the year 960 under St Olga). St Vladimir, having had the cathedral church consecrated to

the Most Holy Theotokos, followed the example of St Constantine in dedicating the capital city of the Russian Land (Kiev) to the Queen of Heaven.

The chronicle has preserved a prayer of St Vladimir, with which he turned to the Almighty at the consecration of the Dormition Tithe church: "O Lord God, look down from Heaven and behold, and visit Your vineyard, which Your right hand has planted. And make this new people, whom You have converted in heart and mind to know You, the True God. And look down upon this Your church, which Your unworthy servant has built in the name of the Mother Who gave birth to Thee, the Ever-Virgin Theotokos. And whoever prays in this church, let his prayer be heard, through the prayers of the All-Pure Mother of God."

To advance the Faith among the newly enlightened people, learned people and schools were needed to help prepare them. Therefore, St Vladimir and the holy Metropolitan Michael "commanded fathers and mothers to take their young children and send them to schools to learn reading and writing." St Joachim of Korsun set up such a school at Novgorod, and they did the same in other cities. "And there were a multitude of schools of scholars, and of these were there a multitude of philosophers."

With a firm hand St Vladimir held in check enemies at the frontiers, and he built fortified cities. He was the first in Russian history to set up a "notched boundary," a line of defensive points against nomadic peoples. "Volodimir began to set up cities along the Desna, along the Vystra, along the Trubezha, along the Sula and along the Stugna. And he settled them with the Novgorodians, the Smolyani, the Chuds and the Vyatichi. He made war against the Pechenegs and defeated them." But the real reason for his success was the peaceful Christian preaching among the pagans of the steppes.



The era of St Vladimir was a crucial period for the formation of Orthodox Rus. The unification of the Slavic lands and the formation of state boundaries under the domain of the Rurikovichs resulted from a strenuous spiritual and political struggle with neighboring tribes and states. The Baptism of Rus was a most important step in its self-definition as a state. The chief enemy of Vladimir became Boleslav the Brave, whose plans included the extensive unification of the West Slavic and East Slavic tribes under the aegis of Catholic Poland. This rivalry arose back when Vladimir was still a pagan: "In the year 6489 (981). Volodimir went against the Lakhs and took their cities, Peremyshl, Cherven, and other cities, which be under Rus." The final years of the tenth century are likewise filled with the wars of Vladimir and Boleslav.

After a brief lull (the first decade of the eleventh century), the "great stand-off" entered into a new phase: in the year 1013 a conspiracy against St Vladimir was discovered at Kiev. Svyatopolk the Accursed, who was married to a daughter of Boleslav, yearned for power. The instigator of the conspiracy was Boleslav's cleric, the Kolobzheg Catholic bishop Reibern.

The conspiracy of Svyatopolk and Reibern was an all-out threat to the historical existence of the Russian state and the Russian Church. St Vladimir took decisive measures. All the three involved were arrested, and Reibern soon died in prison.

St Vladimir did not take revenge on those that "opposed and hated" him. Under the pretense of feigned repentance, Svyatopolk was set free.

A new misfortune erupted in the North, at Novgorod. Yaroslav, not yet "the Wise," as he was later to be known, in the year 1010 having become ruler of Novgorod, decided to defect from his father the Great Prince of Kiev. He formed his own separate army, moving on Kiev to demand the customary tribute and tithe. The unity of the Russian land, for which St Vladimir had struggled all his life, was threatened with ruin. In both anger and in sorrow St Vladimir gave orders to "secure the dams and set the bridges," and to prepare for a campaign against Novgorod. His powers were on the decline. In the

preparations for his final campaign, happily not undertaken, the Baptizer of Rus fell grievously ill and surrendered his soul to the Lord in the village of Spas-Berestov on July 15, 1015. He had ruled the Russian realm for thirty-seven years (978-1015), twenty-eight of these years after his Baptism.

Preparing for a new struggle for power and hoping for Polish assistance, and to play for time, Svyatopolk attempted to conceal the death of his father. But patriotically inclined Kievan nobles, by night, secretly removed the body of the deceased sovereign from the Berestov court, where Svyatopolk's people were guarding it, and they conveyed the body to Kiev. At the Tithe church the coffin with the relics of St Vladimir was met by Kievan clergy with Metropolitan John at the head of the procession. The holy relics were placed in a marble crypt, set within the St Clement chapel of the Dormition church beside the marble crypt of Empress Anna.

The name and deeds of the holy Equal of the Apostles St Vladimir, whom the people called the Splendid Sun, is interwoven with all the successive history of the Russian Church. "Through him we too have come to worship and to know Christ, the True Life," testified St Hilarion. His deeds were continued by his sons, and grandsons and descendants, rulers of the Russian land for almost six centuries, from Yaroslav the Wise, who took the first steps towards the independent existence of the Russian Church, down to the last of the Rurikovichi, Tsar Theodore Ioannovich, under whom (in 1589) the Russian Orthodox Church became the fifth independent Patriarchate in the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches.

The festal celebration of the holy Equal of the Apostles Vladimir was established under St Alexander Nevsky, in memory of the intercession of St Vladimir on May 15, 1240, for his help in gaining the renowned victory by Nevsky over Swedish crusaders. But the first veneration of the holy prince began in Rus rather earlier. The Metropolitan of Kiev St Hilarion (+ 1053), in his "Word on Law and Grace," spoken on the day of memory of St Vladimir at the saint's crypt in the Tithe church, calls him "an apostolic sovereign", like St Constantine, and he compares his apostolic evangelisation of the Russian Land to the evangelisation by the holy Apostles."

References:

1. Texts used from: <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2009/>
2. Detail from a Ukrainian grivna bank note
(taken from: <http://saints.sqpn.com/saintv09.htm>)
3. The Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir, by Viktor Vasnetsov (1890)
(taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_I_of_Kiev)
4. Fresco showing St. Vladimir and the baptism of Russia
(taken from: http://www.pigizois.net/gallery/vaptisi_roson.jpg)
5. Icon of Saint Vladimir, Novgorod, 16th century
(taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:St._Volodymyr.jpg)
6. Icon of St. Vladimir
(taken from: <http://days.pravoslavie.ru/Images/im1716.htm>)



15th Anniversary celebration of the Glorification of Saint John, Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco

In 2009 we celebrate -15th Anniversary celebration of the Glorification of Saint John, Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco.

Saturday, July 4, we commemorate our father among the saints John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco.

Saint John was bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia who served widely from China to France to the United States. He departed this life on June 19/July 2, 1966, and was officially glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad on July 2, 1994. His glorification was later confirmed for universal veneration by the Patriarchate of Moscow on July 2, 2008.

Please, use the following links to learn more about the life of Saint John:

http://www.sfsobor.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87&Itemid=69&lang=en

<http://saintjohnwonderworker.org/lifeidx.htm>

The Incorrupt Relics of Saint John



The relics of St. John—the Miracle-worker of Shanghai and San Francisco and the twentieth century's great ascetic, archpastor and man of prayer--were found to be incorrupt in 1993, on the threshold of his glorification. The relics were transferred from the burial-vault beneath the church into the very Cathedral of the Most Holy Theotokos, the "Joy of All Who Sorrow", in San Francisco, during the glorification of St. John in 1994. His relics are the only intact relics open for veneration in North America. Numerous pilgrims come from all over the world to pray at St. John's relics. On Saturday nights, before the Vigil, a moleben is chanted before the relics. This moleben is open to all. Oil from the continually burning lampada is sent globally to all those that seek St. John's assistance. The Liturgy is performed daily in the Cathedral and there is access during all services to the holy relics.

FROM THE SERMONS OF SAINT JOHN

On the Fall of Man.

(6 March 1954)

THE WORLD WAS CREATED GOOD and called to the joy of life in union with the Source and Creator of life, the Lord God. The first to sin and to be torn from this union were angels. The angelic realm was split: some remained with God; others, in their pride, desired to live their own life, independent of God. The angelic world was split and sin was born there, but the earthly world remained good. And then the devil, which means "the one cast down from heaven," began to strive to join the earthly realm to himself. The highest creation on earth, man, had been given a commandment by God not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Why was the commandment given?

This tree was just like all the others, and in itself it had no outstanding characteristics. No, the knowledge of good and evil was not in the tree itself, and not for this reason was the commandment given. The Lord gave it because man was created free, and the Lord desired of man a free-willed striving and longing for union with God. The commandment was given because only through its fulfillment could man express his free will striving toward God and love for Him. And blessedness consists simply of communication with God through love of Him. The devil is burdened by his separation; he is perpetually in a state of wrath and vengeance, and it comforts him to attract others. The devil never appears as his true self, but takes on various appearances. Then, in paradise, he took on the appearance of a serpent, and gave man the idea that the commandment had not been given for the expression of man's love for God, but rather that man would not become like God. The devil planted the thought that the command was issued, not out of God's love, so that man would dwell in God's love, but because God desired to dominate, and to prevent man from being as God, and from coming to know the endless and limitless joy of being.

When man came to believe this diabolical idea, he was instantly separated from God. Everything changed, and man could no longer enjoy life in God and speak with God freely and straightforwardly as children speak. There was no peace, no joy, and man began to hide from God. Everything changed: the link between God and man was destroyed and nature ceased to heed man. Weeping entered the world, and the soul became burdened.

On Holiness.

(18/31 May 1953)

HOLINESS IS THE FRUIT of man's efforts and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is reached by him who wears a cross and in the name of Christ wages warfare against the obstacles to holiness, obstacles to becoming akin to Christ. These obstacles are sins, sinful habits, firmly rooted in the soul. Struggle against them is the major work of a Christian, and in so far as he purifies his soul, so far will he receive of the Holy Spirit.

St. Seraphim taught the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, and he genuinely acquired it, for the Most Holy Mother of God recognized him as being her own. And the faithful, sincere seekers of the Truth and Light, as was Motovilov, because of their reverence, saw how this great God pleaser shone with the light of holiness.

How varied are the paths of saints! At the throne of God, in front of everyone is the Most Holy Mother of God, more glorious than the seraphim and all the angels and archangels who stood firm, faithful to God through the fearful struggle that was raised against God by the most radiant of them all, Lucifer, which means Light-bearer, who is now the devil, in other words, the one cast down to the deepest darkness. In this struggle the bright angels came so close to God that it is already impossible for them to step back or separate from Him.

All the pleasers of God are like the angels in their love and devotion. They, just as the angels, waged war against the dark forces and became strengthened in love of God. All of the prophets of the Old Testament lived in such a struggle. Godlessness prevailed, the Law of God was forgotten. The world persecuted them because they interfered with its sinful life. They hid in the "depths of the earth." The world hated them. The prophet Isaiah was sawed in two by a wood saw, the prophet Jeremiah was trampled in a swamp. And in such surroundings they stood fast in faith and devotion. All of the righteous ones were sorrowful in the world because they were strangers to the sinful world. All of the apostles suffered in one way or another. Righteous men left for the desert. What made them saints? Suffering? Not suffering alone makes saints, but striving towards God, love of God, and the labor of overcoming obstacles to holiness, which is the fruit of man's labor and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Lay up Treasures in Heaven.

(22 February/7 March, 1954)

THE LORD SPEAKS to all people of all times and races, and tells them something clear and well-known. Today a person is alive, but tomorrow he dies and everything that he has is lost to him. But the soul, which moves the body, continues to live and it is either comforted and happy, or sad and burdened. Man is created thus; the body must live as the soul desires. At the moment of death the soul continues to live without the body. Everything will perish except that which the soul has gathered through love and prayer. Everything virtuous done by a man is written in the soul and will not be taken from him. While a person is alive, he finds himself paying attention to many things: clothing, health, his job, studies. There are times when he is concerned only with the thought of war or a failed harvest - of everything that is necessary for life on earth.

So, too, in spiritual life there are times of special attention to what is needful for the soul. Such is Great Lent - a time of special attention, examination, of the freeing of spiritual forces. Fasting is established by the Holy Spirit. Righteous men, striving towards God, through life experience came to know the meaning of fasting and to bear witness that without fasting there can be no spiritual life. All the various attacks of the devil, all his temptations, everything concerning the diabolic world, is cast aside - becomes powerless

and is shamed - when a person firmly follows the words of the Savior Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ: "...This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21).

Now is a time of fasting, a suitable time for cleansing the soul. This is the most important thing, for a soul to be able to accept the grace of God, so that those treasures will be stored up in the soul, which will not be taken from it. And then the path of its life will be straight; in the soul there will be peace and joy.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."



THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST (June 7/24)
Sermon by Father Robert M. Arida, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church



Barrenness and prophesy are two interconnected themes which permeate the feast of the Baptist's nativity. Elizabeth's barrenness is used by God to reveal his love for the entire creation. This divine love, expressed in divine power and glory, enables the cousin of the Virgin to conceive. The conception and birth of St. John points to the termination not only of the barrenness of Zachariah and Elizabeth but also that of cosmic barrenness. Sin and death had rendered the creation incapable of nurturing and sustaining life. For the reign of death, traced back to Adam's fall, aborted all life which was destined from all eternity to abide in the bosom of God.

Today we celebrate and bear witness to the unfolding of the creation's renewal now affirmed in the birth of John the Baptist. Previously bound to death, the creation begins to reflect its true identity. From the barrenness of Elizabeth emerges the forerunner of the one who is life.

Celebrating the nativity of St. John should be an expression of our thanks to God who has delivered us from the horrible barrenness of death, which not only robs us of our biological existence but strives to impair and ultimately smother the creative powers of the mind and heart. Consequently, human creativity, now imbued with hope and life, is urged on by divine love to transcend its inherent limitations. Finding its highest expression in true worship human creativity is joined to divine life. The human person and his unique energy gradually, through ascetic effort, achieves harmony with the divine energy and hence the unfolding of the eternal ascent into the kingdom which is to come.

As members of the body of Christ, we are endowed with a prophetic calling. We are to proclaim and to show that the barrenness of creation has been filled with life. In the midst of desolation, God has brought John, the greatest of prophets, to prepare the way of

the Lord. Like St. John, we are to continue announcing the prophetic word which awakens the creation from the barren slumber of sin. Like St. John, we are commissioned to lead an anxious and searching humanity to repentance by which it is drawn into the embrace of the Life Giver.

St. John prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah. His call to repentance and baptism formed a faithful remnant that awaited the coming of the Messiah. It was this remnant that helped to provide the human component of the Church. Now we are responsible for continuing the call to repentance, which leads to the baptism of water and the Spirit. This is the baptism that enables humanity to become one with the sacred Passover which takes us from death to life. This is the baptism that compels us to prophesy the Lord's glorious second coming.

The feast of the Baptist's birth affirms the victory of regenerated and transfigured life. New life emerging from the barrenness of sin and death is the joyous core of our feast. Here is the beginning and end of the Church's mission to and for the world.

Amen.

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THE HOLY, GLORIOUS AND ALL-PRAISED LEADERS OF THE APOSTLES,
PETER AND PAUL
June 29/July 12



The Holy Church celebrates the memory of the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul on July 12 (June 29, Old Calendar). They were contemporaries, were well acquainted with one another, and both ended their respective lives on earth with martyrdom in Rome, the capital city of the Empire, approximately 60 years after the Nativity of Christ.

The Church celebrates the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul both on the same day, first of all because they are living symbols of two ways different ways of apprehending God and had two different visions of the Apostolate.

Peter demonstrates the full power of faith of which the sincere and guileless heart of a simple Galilean fisherman may be capable. His Epistles have been preserved in the New Testament, and there is every reason to believe that the Gospel according to Mark, the second of the four Gospels, is a record of the Apostle Peter's preaching. That Gospel, comprised of fewer chapters than the other three, is the digest of an eyewitness account. In the Epistles of St. Peter, we sense the Apostle's mature religious experience and wisdom, but his Epistles

are not marked by the subtle ideation or the crafted argument that characterize the Epistles of St. Paul.

While Peter was a simple fisherman, Saul – as the Apostle Paul was known before his conversion – stood at the pinnacle of the culture of his time, and was schooled not only in Jewish religious tradition, but also in the areas of Greek philosophy and literature.

In jointly honoring these two Apostles and in calling them "Pre-eminent," the Church shows its reverence both for the simplicity of a believing heart, and for an intellect grounded in God.

Typically, faithful who since childhood have been accustomed to reading the Gospels almost never turn to the Epistles – including those of St. Paul – contained in the New Testament. On the other hand, those who come to the Faith consciously, who come as adults and who have rejected their former indifference to or lack of belief in Christ, constantly refer to the Apostle Paul's Epistles, reading them throughout their entire lives, each time finding something new in them.

Sometimes it is difficult to follow the stream of the Apostle Paul's thought, but whoever takes on the task of reading all of the Epistles in his native language, and supplements that reading with the commentaries of the Holy Fathers on the Epistles, will learn many new things that will be of use in his spiritual life and in his coming to know God. A serious reader who reflects upon what he has read will come to see that in a mystical manner, the writings of the Apostle Paul are contemporary: it would be more accurate to state that their wisdom and lofty inspiration have not been subject to the times and have not become dated. Everything that the Apostle Paul says to us about sin and holiness, about the Law and grace, about the spiritual struggle of prayer, and about many other things, is truly relevant today and unto the ages.

Archpriest Victor Potapov



OUR LADY, THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS OF KAZAN
Appearance of the Kazan Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos – July 21/8

Our Lady of Kazan, also called Theotokos of Kazan (Russian: Казанская Богоматерь), is a holy icon of the highest stature within the Russian Orthodox Church, representing the Virgin Mary as the protector and patron of the city of Kazan. It has been considered a palladium of Russia for centuries. Two major Kazan Cathedrals, in Moscow and in St Petersburg, are consecrated to Our Lady of Kazan, as are numerous churches throughout the land.

The original icon has been stolen and never recovered. Ancient and venerated copies have been displayed at the Kazan Cathedral of Moscow, at Yaroslavl, and at St. Petersburg.

The icon was discovered on July 8, 1579, underground in the city of Kazan by a little girl, Matrona. The location of the icon was revealed to her by the Theotokos, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in a Marian apparition. The original icon was kept in the Theotokos Monastery of Kazan built to commemorate the spot where it had been discovered. Other churches were built in honor of the revelation of the Virgin of Kazan and copies of the icon displayed at the Kazan Cathedral of Moscow, at Yaroslavl, and at St. Petersburg.

Kazan Monastery of the Theotokos where the icon was conserved until 1904. Invocation of the Virgin Mary through the icon was credited by the Russian commanders, Dmitry Pozharsky and Mikhail Kutuzov, with helping the country to repel the Polish invasion of 1612, the Swedish invasion of 1709, and Napoleon's invasion of 1812.



In the night on June 29, 1904 the icon was stolen from the church in Kazan where it had been kept for centuries. Thieves apparently coveted the icon's golden setting, which was ornamented with many jewels of highest value. When several years later Russian police finally apprehended the thieves and recovered the precious setting, they declared that the icon itself had been cut to pieces and burnt. The Orthodox Church interpreted the disappearance of the icon as a sign of tragedies that would plague Russia after the image of the Holy Protectress of Russia had been lost.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, there were plenty of theories speculating that the original icon was in fact preserved in St. Petersburg. Reportedly, an icon of Our Lady of Kazan was used in processions around Leningrad fortifications during the Siege of Leningrad. A conflicting theory was that the image had been sold by the Bolsheviks abroad. Although such theories were not credited by the Russian Orthodox Church, a reputed original, (one of several in existence) was acquired by the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima and enshrined in Fátima, Portugal in the 1970s. The image proved to be a copy, dated by experts to ca. 1730.

In 1993, the icon from Fátima was given to Pope John Paul II, who took it to the Vatican and had it installed in his study, where it was venerated by him for eleven years. In his own words, "...it has found a home with me and has accompanied my daily service to the Church with its motherly gaze." John Paul II wished to visit Moscow or Kazan in order to return the icon to the Russian Orthodox Church. When these efforts were blocked by the Moscow Patriarchate, the icon was presented to the Russian Church unconditionally in August 2004. On August 26, 2004 it was exhibited for veneration on the altar of St. Peter's Basilica and then delivered to Moscow. On the next feast day of the holy icon, July 21, 2005, Patriarch Alexius II and Mintimer Shaimiev, the President of Tatarstan, placed it in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Kazan Kremlin.

The icon is enshrined in the Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, the site where the original icon of Our Lady of Kazan was found. Plans are underway to make the monastery where the icon was found into an international pilgrimage center.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia





The Holy Royal Martyrs in the Light of History and God's Providence

Behind all wars, revolution, downfall of kingdoms, – all the political events of external history – we see the hidden working of spiritual laws and, in the final analysis, God's Providence concerning the fates of peoples and nations. Any other explanation of the reasons for the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 would be incomprehensible and inaccurate. One thing is certain: the Russian society's apostasy from God and the Church brought down God's wrath upon Russia. As in the many cases of ancient Israel's apostasy from God, about which we read in the Bible, Russia's malady could not be cured by ordinary measures. For the sake of instruction and correction God would hand the Jews over into the hands of infidels; the very same fate befell Russia in the beginning of the 20th century.

Holy martyr Tsar Nicholas II



Through Tsar Nicholas II – an irreproachably pure and wonderful person – God's will was made manifest in the world. His fate, in essence, was deeply tragic. He was born on the day of St. Job the Much-suffering and was keenly aware that his life was similar to Job's martyric path.

His knowledge of his fate was truly prophetic. "I have more than a presentiment, – he used to say, – that I am doomed to terrible trials, and that I will not be rewarded for them in this world." Beginning with Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war, which was followed by the revolution of 1905-1907, which diminished the Tsar's power and freed the forces of anarchy and outright evil, the foundations of Russian sovereignty tottered more and more. "I am unsuccessful in all my undertakings, – the Tsar bitterly concluded, – I have no luck. However, man's will is so powerless anyway." He realized that he was not subjectively to blame for Russia's misfortunes; the good of the motherland meant more to him than anything else, and he did everything he could for this good. Tsar Nicholas's conscience was clear before God, but his moral suffering, nevertheless, reached extraordinary proportions. Thus once,

– this was during the first Russian revolution, – from the depths of his inner anguish the Tsar uttered prophetic words which indicated with absolute accuracy the role he was invisibly assigned to play in Russia's fate by God Himself. "Perhaps a sacrifice is needed

for the salvation of Russia, – said the Sovereign. – I shall be that sacrifice. May God’s will be done.” In saying this the Tsar was like the martyrs of ancient times, who freely and without coercion gave themselves up to suffering for Christ. Nicholas II was murdered in July of 1918 not simply as a helpless and defenseless person: the extraordinary courage of his behavior as he descended into the cellar of the Ipatyev house with his sick son in his arms, and even earlier, when he and the Empress refused to emigrate or flee the country, – all this speaks of the fact that their souls were ready for sacrificial and Christ-like suffering, which fulfilled the prophetic words spoken by him 10 years before.

When Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Russia came to the aid of this small Slavic nation. This event still lives in the historic memory of the Serbs; and if among European nations there is still anyone who loves Russia and Russians – it is the Serbs. However, their greatest love was for Tsar Nicholas II, who had sanctioned Russia’s participation in the war. It was the Serbs who began venerating the Russian Tsar as a saint, placing him on a par with their great Saint Savva of Serbia. And it was among the Russians in Serbia that the issue of canonizing the Royal Family was brought up for the first time in 1938.

The beginning of the war brought success to the Russians at the front, and the country was gripped by patriotic fervor. The rear provided immense aid to the front; the Empress and the Princesses took an active part in it. After learning the art of nursing, they daily spent many hours in the hospitals.



The Empress and her daughters Olga and Tatyana tended the wounded and sat with the dying, providing great comfort to the sufferers. The Empress and Tatyana also worked as surgical nurses; it is not hard to imagine their courage, patience and truly Christian love: assisting the doctors in numerous amputations of injured limbs required, besides training, great moral strength. The Winter Palace was also turned into a huge hospital. This enterprise also included the preparation of undergarments, warm clothes, and other items needed by the soldiers at the front; the entire work was organized by the Empress. She also sent to the front a multitude of Gospels, icons, and crosses, which were handed out to the soldiers. One can imagine the joy of a soldier who had received such a blessing from the Empress!

The holy Princesses Olga and Tatyana

Soon, however, our armies’ offensive stopped, while our losses began to increase. Discontent arose in the top circles of society – both in the capital and at military headquarters. The revolutionaries made use of the lack of success at the front, in order to disseminate their propaganda at the front and in the rear. The Germans quickly moved toward the heart of Russia; in these conditions, wishing to raise the spirit of the troops,

the Tsar took upon himself the supreme command and moved to General Headquarters, deployed at Mogilev. Prince Alexis went with him to the front.

However, making use of the Tsar's absence from the capital, oppositional aristocracy increased its activity. The court discussed the advisability of a coup d'état, placing Grand Duke Nicholas (the Tsar's uncle) on the throne. The opposing faction asserted that the Tsar and the Empress stood in the way of Russia's victory in the war; Grand Duke Nicholas sent the Tsar a telegram, entreating him to abdicate the throne. Similar telegrams were also sent by the majority of the commanding officers at the front. And when a revolution occurred in February 1917, the Tsar's entourage took the side of the provisional government. The Tsar was assured that only his abdication from the throne could save Russia. And in the face of such betrayal the Tsar sacrificed himself, heeding these voices. After a fervent prayer during the night in front of an icon, he abdicated the throne; this took place on March 2nd. "There is no sacrifice that I would not make for the true good and salvation of Russia. For this reason I am ready to abdicate the throne" – such is the telegram he sent to the chairman of the Duma.

However, after the abdication everything turned out contrary to what the opposition was expecting: the people began to fall prey to their basest passions and moral decay set in; with unbridled speed Russia rushed towards destruction. The Tsar's sacrifice was accepted by God, but not in the way that the architects of the abdication had in mind: there was no immediate outward benefit from it. The Tsar had been that mystic principle which had restrained the forces of evil; now nothing prevented anti-Christian elements from entering into the world.

A new era began for the Sovereign and his family: their worldly life ended and their saints' life began, together with their Christian exploits. The Tsar and his entourage were kept under guard at Tsarskoye Selo. The prisoners pinned their hopes only on God's will, and the Lord helped them retain their inner peace until the very end. The Tsar and his family were subjected to humiliation and mockery from the guards and the other "new" people who now surrounded them. On July 31st the martyrs' path to Golgotha began: they were taken from their palace and sent on to Siberia.



Holy martyr Empress Alexandra

On August 6th the Royal Family arrived in Tobolsk on the ship "Rus'." "My heart bleeds inexpressibly for the dear homeland," – these words of the Empress in a private letter describe the inner state of the entire family. But its members were cheerful: they were fortified by their faith, the Church, and God's grace. They faithfully participated in church services; the Empress and the children sang in the choir. Through their suffering the Royal Martyrs' spirit grew stronger. "God's way is a daily cross," – the Empress wrote these words of St. Isaac the Syrian in her notebook.

"Christians must undergo sorrows and external and internal warfare, in order to conquer

these blows through patience. Such is the path of Christianity,” – another of her excerpts (from St. Mark the Great) reveals to us the inner state of the sufferers.

On the eve of Pascha of 1918 the Royal Family was parted. A commissar arrived from the Bolsheviks in Moscow and announced to the Tsar that he would be taken away. The Empress decided to accompany her husband despite great inner agony, since she was thus being forced to part from the sick Prince Alexis. Princess Maria went together with her parents... This parting was a torment for the entire family.

The royal couple was detained by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg. In early May the other members of the family came here, together with several loyal servants. The martyrs had two and a half months to live. They were tormented with increasing subtlety, but even among the brutal guards there were those who bowed down before their Christian meekness and humility.

During the night of July 17th the greatest crime was committed: innocent, holy people, together with God's anointed, were heinously murdered. Three days before this villainy a church service was served for the Royal Family. When the prayer "Grant repose with the saints..." was sung, the martyrs unexpectedly got down on their knees. As though sensing their imminent end, they sang a funeral hymn for themselves... That fatal night the guards came for them, saying that they were being taken out of the city. Instead, they were taken down to the cellar; several chairs were standing there, and the Tsar sat in the middle, holding the Tsarevich in his arms. Together with the Royal Family were Doctor Botkin and their loyal servants. They waited for a sign of departure, but instead a commissar entered the cellar accompanied by soldiers.

The Holy Royal Martyrs



The commissar – his name was Yurovskiy – announced the forthcoming execution. The Empress only had time to make the sign of the cross; she was killed instantly, at the same time as the Emperor. Prince Alexis and Princess Anastasia suffered longer than the rest; the first bullets did not bring them death, and so the soldiers killed them off with bayonets. The doctor and the three servants died also, sharing the fate of the Royal Family out of love for them. This sacrilegious murder was not simply a private crime of the political revolution: it was a universal sin. The burden of the sin of regicide still continues to lie upon Russia.

Tsar Nicholas II and his family were the carriers of the ideals of Holy Russia, of the ideals of Orthodoxy. In contrast to many people of that era – Christians in name only – they treated Orthodoxy with all seriousness. They were God's elect and, therefore, people

not of this world; they were alien to the society of those times. As true Christians, they were persecuted in this world; their sorrowful path was crowned by martyrdom. Now, together with all the other Russian saints, they stand before Christ in prayer for Russia.

THE WHITE CRUSADE

Our shoulders held high, in our satchels
Wild honey and locusts we bear –
We're the glorious warriors' forerunners,
We pay homage to the holy crusade.

In our reverent and austere service
To the holy river Jordan we call,
For behind us who baptize with phrases
Will come warriors to baptize with swords.

May the white-winged cuirasses soar then!
May the golden spear glisten aloft!
I, the herald of unfading glory,
Gave to God my entire heart...

So be it! My uplifted shoulders
Bending down on the meadow of white,
My crusader's songs like candles
Before the image of Russia I'll light.

- Ivan Savin (*poet of Russian sorrow*)
Translated by Natalia Sheniloff



FROM THE DESERT FATHERS

On Forgiveness

A brother who was insulted by another brother came to Abba Sisoës, and said to him: "I was hurt by my brother, and I want to avenge myself". Abba tried to console him and said: "Don't do that, my child. Rather leave vengeance to God". But he said: "I will not quit until I avenge myself". Then Abba said: "Let us pray, brother; and standing up, he said:

"Our Father... forgive us our trespasses as we forgive NOT those who trespass against us..." Hearing these words, the brother fell at the feet of the Abba and said: "I am not going to fight with my brother any more. Forgive me, Abba."

On Encounter with Holiness

Three Fathers used to go and visit Blessed Anthony every year and two of them used to discuss their thoughts and the salvation of their souls with him, but the third always remained silent and did not ask him anything. After a long time, Abba Anthony said to him, 'You often come here, but you never ask me anything,' and the other replied, 'It is enough for me to see you, Father.' On Acquisition of Virtue Abba Anthony said, "Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge, or else we labor in vain."

On God's Will

When Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, "Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?"

He heard a voice answering him, "Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them."



A guide to Orthodox life

Clergy Etiquette

The following is a guide for properly addressing Orthodox clergy. Most of the titles do not exactly correspond to the terms used in Greek, Russian, or the other native languages of the national Orthodox Churches, but they have been widely accepted as standard English usages.

Greeting Clergy in Person. When we address Deacons or Priests, we should use the title "Father." Bishops we should address as "Your Grace." Though all Bishops (including Patriarchs) are equal in the Orthodox Church, they do have different administrative duties and honors that accrue to their rank in this sense. Thus, "Your Eminence" is the proper title for Bishops with suffragans or assistant Bishops, Metropolitans, and most Archbishops. "Your Beatitude" is the proper title for Patriarchs (except for the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, who is addressed as "Your All—Holiness"). When we approach an Orthodox Presbyter or Bishop (but not a Deacon), we make a bow by reaching down and touching the floor with our right hand, place our right hand over the left (palms upward), and say: "Bless, Father" (or "Bless, Your Grace," or "Bless, Your Eminence," etc.). The Priest or Bishop then answers, "May the Lord bless you," blesses us with the Sign of the Cross, and places his right hand in our hands. We kiss then his hand.



We should understand that when the Priest or Bishop blesses us, he forms his fingers to represent the Christogram "ICXC" a traditional abbreviation of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ" (i.e., the first and last letters of each of the words "IHCOYC XRICTOC"). Thus, the Priest's blessing is in the Name of Christ, as he emphasizes in his response to the believer's request for a blessing. Other responses to this request are used by many clergy, but the antiquity and symbolism of the tradition which we have presented are compelling arguments for its use. We should also note that the reason that a lay person kisses the hand of a Priest or Bishop is to show respect to his Apostolic office. More importantly, however, since both hold the Holy Mysteries in their hands during the Divine Liturgy, we show respect to the Holy Eucharist when we kiss their hands. In fact, Saint John Chrysostomos once said that if one were to meet an Orthodox Priest walking along with an Angel, that he should greet the Priest first and kiss his hand, since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord. For this latter reason, we do not normally kiss the hand of a Deacon. [98] While a Deacon in the Orthodox Church holds the first level of the Priesthood (Deacon, Presbyter, Bishop), his service does not entail blessing the Mysteries. When we take leave of a Priest or Bishop, we should again ask for a blessing, just as we did when we first greeted him.

In the case of married clergy, the wife of a Priest or Deacon is also informally addressed with a title. Since the Mystery of Marriage binds a Priest and his wife together as "one flesh," [99] the wife shares in a sense her husband's Priesthood. This does not, of course, mean that she has the very Grace of the Priesthood or its office, but the dignity of her husband's service certainly accrues to her. [100] The various titles used by the national Churches are listed below.

- Greek: Presbytera (Pres—vee—té—ra)
- Russian: Matushka (Má—toosh—ka)
- Serbian: Papadiya (Pa—pá—dee—ya)
- Bulgarian: Popadiya (Po—pa—dee—ya)

Ukrainian: Panimatushka (Pa—nee—má—toosh—ka), or Panimatka (Pa—nee—mát—ka)

The wife of a Deacon is called "Diakonissa [Thee—a—kó—nees—sa]" in Greek. The Slavic Churches commonly use the same title for the wife of a Deacon as they do for the wife of a Priest. In any case, the wife of a Priest should normally be addressed with both her title and her name in informal situations (e.g., "Presbytera Mary," "Diakonissa Sophia," etc.).

Greeting Clergy on the Telephone. Whenever you speak to Orthodox clergy of Priestly rank on the telephone, you should always begin your conversation by asking for a blessing: "Father, bless." When speaking with a Bishop, you should say "Bless, Despota [Thés—po—ta]" (or "Vladika [Vlá—dee—ka]" in Slavonic, "Master" in English). It is also appropriate to say, "Bless, Your Grace" (or "Your Eminence," etc.). You should end your conversation by asking for a blessing again.

Addressing Clergy in a Letter. When we write to a clergyman (and, by custom, monastics), we should open our letter with the greeting, "Bless, Father." At the end of the letter, it is customary to close with the following line: "Kissing your right hand...." It is not appropriate to invoke a blessing on a clergyman, as many do: "May God bless you." Not only does this show a certain spiritual arrogance before the image of the cleric, but laymen do not have the Grace of the Priesthood and the prerogative to bless in their stead. Even a Priest properly introduces his letters with the words, "The blessing of the Lord" or "May God bless you," rather than offering his own blessing. Though he can do the latter, humility prevails in his behavior, too. Needless to say, when a clergyman writes to his ecclesiastical superior, he should ask for a blessing and not bestow one.



Formal Address. Deacons in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Reverend Deacon," if they are married Deacons. If they are Deacons who are also monks, they are addressed as "The Reverend Hierodeacon." If a Deacon holds the honor of Archdeacon or Protodeacon, he is addressed as "The Reverend Archdeacon" or "The Reverend Protodeacon." Deacons hold a rank in the Priesthood and are, therefore, not laymen. This is an important point to remember, since so many Orthodox here in America have come to think of the Deacon as a kind of "quasi—Priest." This is the result of Latin influence and poor teaching. As members of the Priesthood, Deacons must be addressed, as we noted

above, as "Father" (or "Deacon Father").

Orthodox Priests are addressed as "The Reverend Father," if they are married Priests. If they are Hieromonks (monks who are also Priests), they are addressed as "The Reverend Hieromonk." Priests with special honors are addressed in this manner: an Archimandrite (the highest monastic rank below that of Bishop), "The Very Reverend Archimandrite"

(or, in the Slavic jurisdictions, "The Right Reverend Archimandrite"); and Protopresbyters, "The Very Reverend Protopresbyter." In personal address, as we noted above, all Priests are called "Father," usually followed by their first names (e.g., "Father John").

Bishops in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Right Reverend Bishop," followed by their first name (e.g., "The Right Reverend Bishop John"). Archbishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs are addressed as "The Most Reverend Archbishop" ("Metropolitan," or "Patriarch"). Because they are also monastics, all ranks of Archpastors (Bishops, Archbishops, Metropolitans, or Patriarchs) are addressed by their first names or first names and sees (e.g., "Bishop John of San Francisco"). It is not correct to use the family name of a Bishop—or any monastic for that matter. Though many monastics and Bishops use their family names, even in Orthodox countries like Russia and Greece, this is absolutely improper and a violation of an ancient Church custom.

All male monastics in the Orthodox Church are called "Father," whether they hold the Priesthood or not, and are formally addressed as "Monk (name)," if they do not have a Priestly rank. If they are of Priestly rank, they are formally addressed as "Hieromonk" or "Hierodeacon" (see above). Monastics are some-times addressed according to their monastic rank; for example, "Rasophore—monk (name)," "Stavrophore—monk (name)," or "Schemamonk (name)." The Abbot of a monastery is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbot," whether he holds Priestly rank or not and whether or not he is an Archimandrite by rank. Under no circumstances whatsoever is an Orthodox monk addressed by laymen as "Brother." This is a Latin custom. The term "Brother" is used in Orthodox monasteries in two instances only: first, to designate beginners in the monastic life (novices or, in Greek, dokimoi ["those being tested"]), who are given a blessing, in the strictest tradition, to wear only the inner cassock and a monastic cap; and second, as an occasional, informal form of address between monastics themselves (including Bishops).



Again, as we noted above, a monk should never use his last name. This reflects the Orthodox understanding of monasticism, in which the monastic dies to his former self and abandons all that identified him in the world. Lay people are also called to respect a monk's death to his past. (In Greek practice, a monk sometimes forms a new last name from the name of his monastery. Thus a monk from the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery [Mone Agiou Gregoriou Palama, in Greek] might take the name Agiogregorites.)

The titles which we have used for male monastics also apply to female monastics. In fact, a community of female monastics is often called a "monastery" rather than a convent (though there is nothing improper, as some wrongly claim, in calling a monastery for women a "convent"), just as the word "convent," in its strictest meaning, can apply to a monastic community of males, too. Women monastics are formally addressed as "Nun (name)" or "Rasophore—nun (name)," etc., and the Abbess of a convent is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbess."

Though traditions for informal address vary, in most places, Rasophore nuns are called "Sister," while any monastic above the rank of Rasophore is called "Mother." Novices are addressed as "Sister."

There are, as we have noted, some differences in the way that Orthodox religious are addressed. What we have given above corresponds to a reasonably standardized vocabulary as one would find it in more traditional English—language Orthodox writings and among English—speaking Orthodox monastics. The influx of Latin converts into Orthodox monasticism and the phenomenon of "monasticism by convenient rule, instant tradition, and fabrication," as Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna has called it, are things that have also led to great confusion in the use of English terminology that corresponds more correctly to the vocabulary of traditional Orthodox monastics.

From Father David Cownie and Presbytera Juliana Cownie, A Guide to Orthodox Life (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1996), pp. 90-96.

Is there a proper way to address and sign letters to clergy/fellow Orthodox?

When one writes a clergyman, he should begin his letter in this way: "Bless!" or "I ask for your blessing." The letter may be signed: "In Christ," "Asking for your prayers," etc. Lay people should refrain from blessing a Priest (i.e., "God bless you"), and Priests should greet each other with a simple request for a blessing. Lay people may greet each other with a simple request for prayers and close their letters in the same way. The flowery exhortations that were especially popular in the nineteenth-century Russian Church ("Christ is in our midst," "Glory be to God," inter alia), and usually taken from the Liturgy, are not traditional forms of greeting for clergy or for lay people. Nor are the greetings exchanged between great Church Fathers and the Saints. Though these high-sounding exhortations are very popular now, since they appeal to the Protestant evangelical piety which has invaded the Church, when used by the poor Christians that we are today, they are at odds with the humility which derives from a piety engendered by submission to Christ and to the traditions of His Church.

Orthodox Tradition, Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 10-11.



WHY DOES THE LORD PERMIT ILLNESS?

The Lord permits illnesses to come upon us, first of all, for our sins — to remit them, to change our immoral style of living, to realize this sinfulness and understand, that the earthly life — is a short moment, beyond which stands eternity, and what eternity will be like depends on the life one leads on earth.

Sometimes children are ill because of the sins of the parents, in order that sorrow would destroy their thoughtless life, force them to think and change, to purify themselves from passions and vices.

We suffer illnesses for our humility and keeping us from evil and ruinous deeds. Once Jesus Christ was walking with his disciples, and the apostles noticed a person who had been born without legs. He sat at the side of the road and asked alms. The disciples asked: "Why doesn't he have legs?" Christ answered: "If he had had legs, he would have covered the earth with fire and sword" (from an apocryphal gospel).



Often the Lord tears us out of our day to day life through illness, protecting us from serious harm, through a small unpleasantness keeping us from a greater. Many illnesses result from the activity of the unclean spirits. And many symptoms of demonic attacks can be very similar to natural illnesses. It is clear from the Gospel that the crooked woman who was cured by the Lord (Lk. 13:11-26) was not possessed, but the reason for her illness was the activity of an unclean spirit. In such cases medical skill is futile, and healing can be given only through the power of God, who banishes the spirit of evil.

The Christian view of illnesses consists of humble acceptance of God's will, in the recognition of one's sinfulness and those sins, for which the illness was brought on; in repentance and changing one's life. Prayer, fast, alms and other good deeds placate the Lord, and He sends us healing. If we do go to doctors, then we ask God's blessing for recovery and trust our body to them, but not our soul.

<http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/beginning2/illness.shtml>



MISCELLANEOUS

ICON OF ST. JOHN OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO AND RELIC'S DONATION

We are very grateful to announce that Matushka Tatiana Kupec with the children has donated to our Church an icon of St. John of Shanghai and San-Francisco. Our Rector, Fr. Lubomir has painted the icon. The relics of St. John have been mounted on the icon, too. These relics have been given to us by his Excellence Archbishop Cyril of San-Francisco, with the help of our parishioner, Tatiana and her brother, Nikolai.

ANNOUNCEMENT

"Orthodox Encyclopedia", an ecclesiastical-scientific Center, issued two videos about the life of Russian orthodox Christians living in Texas, USA.

To view these films, please use the following links:

Travelling the USA, Part 1 <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/722001.html>

Travelling the USA, Part 2 <http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/723427.html>

NEW BOOKLETS



Please ask to obtain the new booklets in English and Russian, available at no cost at the candle stand. And check often – soon more will be offered.

New booklets in Russian and English:

- **The Sacraments**
- **Guidelines for Proper Conduct in Church**
(by Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko, +1960))

LAST MONTH'S BULLETIN



If you haven't yet picked up last Month's bulletin, it is available at the candle-stand in the church, or it can be requested by e-mail from the senior sister Ekaterina (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu).

TO SUBMIT ENTRIES FOR THE CHURCH BULLETIN



All parishioners are asked, (if you have desire for), to submit entries (news for baptisms, weddings, requests for special prayers, also articles, announcements, etc... in English or Russian) for our Church bulletin as early in the month as possible, each month (so your material could be included the very next issue). If at all possible, please submit your material by e-mail to Editor Ekaterina Marinova (senior sister) at marinova@bcm.tmc.edu. Entries also can be dropped off in the church, during scheduled services.

I encourage all of you, please make an effort to participate and contribute to our future newsletters.

COLLECTING COINS TO SUPPORT OUR PARISH LIFE



Please remember to keep filling your coin jars. If each of us filled the jar with pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters and donate them, think how we could surprisingly support our parish life here at St. Vladimir Church. You might have already filled jars and please bring them to the Church. If you have any further questions or would like an empty coin jar please contact Ekaterina (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu) or Lydia

(lydia.krawtzowa@windstream.net).

E-mail list: If you would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please send your e-mail to marinova@bcm.tmc.edu or call me at 713-790-1336.

If you would like to post a notice of your Wedding, Baptism, or if you have any other good news for the Church Bulletin, please e-mail your request to marinova@bcm.tmc.edu or call me at 713-790-1336

“The Joy of Giving”:

The “St. Xenia” Sisterhood of St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church has initiated the program “Help feed the needy”.

The Sisterhood is going to collect money for donating to those unfortunate ones who come and see our Church out of the street.

A \$10-\$20 donation for the needy can be donated at any time.

We hope for all of you to join and share the Orthodox Christian Spirit of giving to those in need!

“Collection for the Poor”:

Please plan to give generously every Sunday to those whose lives are less fortunate than ours. Donations can also be placed in the Poor Box placed at the kiosk at any time.

May God bless you for your generosity and charity!

“Special Services”:

If you are planning to have a special service in the Church, please be considerate and notify Fr. Lubomir in advance. When you are planning for a Baptism, Wedding, Funeral, or any other Prayer Service in the Church, please speak with the Rector in advance to determine if there is any way you can contribute to help the Church in helping others. Thank you.

Please note: if the services of the Church Choir are required, please notify the Choir Director, George, or the head sister Ekaterina, as soon as possible.

Many Thanks ...

- to those who helped clean the Church last week (and in the past)! To all of you who made so many efforts to beautify the Church for the feast day! May the Lord reward you for your zealous care of His House!
- to the Church Committee Secretary Aleksey Ignatiev for fulfilling the project about making more room around the church for walking.
- to the Church Warden Michael Gautreaux who took care of the broken AC in the Church. Now the summer does not look so bad.



Posted by the Senior-Sister Ekaterina.

(Some sources for this issue have been used from the web net as indicated)

PHOTO GALLERY





Happy Birthday to our dear sister Galina Benkovich! We wish you all Lord's blessings!

