

THE NATIVITY FAST: Why We Fast

St. Symeon of Thessaloniki (ca. A.D. 1381–1429) writes: The Nativity Forty-day Fast represents the fast undertaken by Moses, who—having fasted for forty days and forty nights—received the Commandments of God, written on stone tablets. And we, fasting for forty days, will reflect upon and receive from the Virgin the living Word—not written upon stone, but born, incarnate [taking flesh and blood]—and we will commune of His Divine Body.

November 15, marks the beginning of the Nativity Fast (40 days before Christmas). During the Fast we abstain from meat, dairy and eggs, anger, gossip and sometimes olive oil and wine. We also work to increase time in prayer and acts of mercy. The following article offers some thoughts on the purpose of fasting



THE FEAST OF THE ENTRANCE

Prelude to Christmas

IN A PODCAST about the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos (November 21), Fr. Thomas Hopko said that the November 21st feast is a celebration about the inner life of the Church, and concerns therefore what we call *dogma*. Holy Friday and Pascha are certainly dogma, but they may also be considered *Kerygma*, which means preaching and proclamation of the Gospel. Prayer, the Liturgy, icons, saints, etc., are all aspects of dogma, of the inner life of the Christian in the Church.

Fr. Thomas recalled in this podcast, that a woman in college said to him that “when you try to talk about faith in God, and the Church to other students at college you realize you’re inside the life of the Church. If you are outside, looking in, you can never understand it. And when you’re inside it, you can never explain it, because it’s a mystery beyond what words can actually explain.”

Fr. Thomas went on:

The Holy Mysteries are beyond words. You can preach the Gospel of Christ crucified, but to try to give words to the ineffable, the inconceivable, the invisible, the reality that you come to know through the flesh of Christ, through His Broken Body, through his spilled Blood, by the very Spirit of God, you enter into a silence that is beyond words, and when you have that silence beyond words, that’s contemplated within Church services with lots of words! When you’re talking about the ineffable and singing about the ineffable and celebrating the ineffable, you’ve got to use a lot of words, and you say a lot of poetically marvelous things... But how do you move from the outside to the inside? The way you move is: you hear the Gospel. You hear the preaching of Matthew, Mark,

and Luke. You hear the Passion story. You know about Christ, Him crucified, raised, and glorified. Then you hear about what the early Christians did and how they were. And then you come to believe it. And then you come to surrender yourself to it. And then, believing it and surrendering it yourself, you are baptized into it. You die to this life. You are raised with Christ. You are sealed with the Spirit. You enter into the Church. You receive the Holy sacraments. ...And then you can sing, “We have seen the true Light. We have found the true Faith. We have received...”

So this festival of the Entrance of Mary, the Mother of God, to the Temple, it’s an entrance into the inner mystery. It is a contemplation, an experience and contemplation of the deepest realities of Christian faith and life. And it’s done by contemplating the three-year-old little Mary, entering into the Temple. And it all opens up, and then you see the whole thing, and it just blows you away! And then you celebrate it and you sing these songs and you know that, truly, this woman is the abode of heaven. And so are all of us, if we could believe and be filled with grace like she is. Christ dwells in her; she becomes the living Temple. And so can we! Christ can be born in us, as the Holy Fathers say. He has to be born in us. He has to be incarnate in our flesh. Our bodies must become members of Christ, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians...

Vigil for the Entrance will be on Monday, Nov. 20 at 6:15 PM, and the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, Nov. 21 at 9 AM.

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral
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The Rector, Fr. Lawrence Margitich, may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net.

Parish Contacts

| | |
|--|----------------|
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Fifth Annual Thanksgiving Dinner Project

Families to Families

HELP PROVIDE THANKSGIVING dinner for 100 Sonoma County families living in poverty. \$50.00 provides for a full Thanksgiving Dinner Food Box. If you, or your family, are not able to sponsor a full box, please consider sharing a box with other church members! In an effort to make this charity effort efficient we will be accepting monetary donations only (checks can be made out to St. Seraphim Church/charity). Help will be needed in putting together individual boxes (times to be announced). This effort is extremely appreciated and impactful. If you have any questions you can contact Amy Ramirez Margitich at fosasquatch@gmail.com or Serge Anderson at s.anderson4990@sbcglobal.net.

THE PLACE OF MAN'S DEIFICATION

Those who wish to unite with Christ, and, through Jesus Christ, with God the Father, recognize that this union is realized in the body of Christ, which is our Holy Orthodox Church. A union, of course, not with the Divine essence, but with the deified human nature of Christ. But this union with Christ is not external, nor is it simply moral. We are not followers of Christ in the way that some perhaps follow a

philosopher or a teacher. We are members of Christ's body, the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, the real body, not a moral one, as some theologians have mistakenly written, not having looked deeply into the spirit of the Holy Church. In spite of our unworthiness and sinfulness, Christ takes us Christians and incorporates us into His body. He makes us members of Himself. And so we become real members of the body of Christ, not just morally. As the Apostle Paul puts it, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). —*Archimandrite George of Mt. Athos*

QUIET IN CHURCH ~ Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom)

I would ask you of you to carefully consider the following admonition of the late and ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony. Quietness in Church—before, during and after Liturgy—is not about having quiet children. Of course, children can make noise and be fussy, but it seems to me that our parents are really extraordinarily attentive to their children, and are able to manage the situation effectively and quickly. The noise of young children and babies is one thing—it's a sign of life. On the other hand, talking by those who came to pray is the sign of spiritual trouble. All of us, those in the Altar, the Choir, the main body of the Church, and the Narthex—especially the Narthex (is it really necessary to talk when getting candles??)—can try to be quiet in church. —Fr Lawrence

SOME PEOPLE find it difficult to comply with my insistence on quiet and silence in the church, not only during the Services, which should be obvious, but before and after. And I think we must realize something which we forget so often: that our being present before the face of God does not begin at the moment when the priest pronounces the first holy words of the Service; this is the place of God, this is His dwelling place; these, in terms of the Old Testament, are the Gates of Heaven. And when we come to the church, the first thing which we must realize, is that we are in the presence, and that this presence can be perceived and lived with only in the deep silence of our souls. Not only the silence of words, but the silence of all powers of our being in awe and adoration before God. It is only if we enter into the Service from within this silence that the words of prayer will reach us and blossom out into a new depth of contemplative silence, of serenity, and will have power to transform and transfigure us. So, it is not (only) a matter of church discipline or of protecting other people's prayer against our own dissipation; it is a matter of entering ourselves into the mystery of this presence, so that through the liturgy we may gradually be transformed and brought into that depth where one meets God...

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CATECHISM CLASSES** begin on Saturday, October 28 at 3:30 PM, in the Parish Library. Eight classes will be given before Nativity, and another eight before Pascha. All are welcome to attend, not just catechumens.
- **BAPTISM:** Sunday, October 29 at 9 AM, Moses, child of Lydia and Jordan.
- **WEDNESDAY EVENING POTLUCKS AND TALKS:** Fr Edward Henderson, pastor of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Berkeley, will give two talks on the Russian Orthodox Old Ritualists, AKA Old Believers, Wednesdays Nov. 1 and Nov. 8 after Vespers. This is a potluck evening, so please bring a non-meat or dairy dish, enough to share with others.
- **ANGELS UNAWARES:** Our guests arrive about 6 PM on Thursday, November 2. Volunteers are asked to come about 5 PM to assist with setting up the Hall for dinner. Any questions call Rachel (799-4117) or Michael Dovey (618-6585).
- **CHILDREN'S CHOIR REHEARSALS:** Saturdays, November 4 and 18 at 4 PM in the Protection Church.
- **THE KAZAN SKETE** will celebrate the feast of the Kazan Icon on Saturday, November 4, with the Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM. His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, is expected to serve. All are welcome.
- **THE MONASTERY OF THE ASSUMPTION**, in Calistoga, will host a retreat on November 4 led by Abbot Tryphon from Vashon Island. His topic is "Incarnating Christ in the midst of our world." Begins at 9 AM. Call (707) 942-6244 to register.
- **ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5** we will welcome new CATECHUMENS: Sarah Stewart, Hannah Prudhomme (close friend of Alex Stameroff), Sonya Elm with her two children Luke and Lilly. Did you know that when the Catechumens are directed by the Deacon to "depart, all catechumens, depart" they go to the Parish Library where they will have a lesson taught by one of our seven catechists?
- **PARISH RETREAT WITH Fr. Timothy Pavlatos**, has been rescheduled for January 27.
- **PLEASE BE MINDFUL** that before the Sunday Divine Liturgy confessions are heard from 9 AM until the beginning of the Liturgy at 10 AM. A much more appropriate time to confess is before, during (when there is a priest available) and after Vespers on Saturdays, or any day during the week by appointment. If the parish members would like Fr. John or me to be available on a set weekday afternoon, please do let us know, and we can arrange that. —Fr. Lawrence
- **Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church**, on Stony Point Road, will hold its Pre-Christmas Bazaar on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 11/12.
- **THANKSGIVING DAY:** The best way to begin Thanksgiving Day is with the Divine Liturgy. We will have the service in the Protection Church, 9:30 AM, and conclude with an excerpt of the Akathist "Glory to God for All Things."
- **OUR THANKS TO ADAM** from "NorCal Gopher Trapping," who did a great job here at the parish. A few parish members asked about his contact info: 707-570-6319 or email at adam@norcalgophertrapping.com
- **THE PARISH FIRE RELIEF FUND** has received \$26,492 as of 10/26/2017. Over \$6,000 was dispersed during the first week of the fire, with more being given last week. Needs will increase as recovery continues, so we are managing the fund carefully. The income/expense record is being tracked by Martin Thong and Bobbi Griovski, and is available for review upon request.
- **PARISH NEED:** The area around the solar panels needs to be mowed, and the panels washed. See Fr. Lawrence for more info.

Sunday, November 5, 2017

Pan-Orthodox Vespers 4:30 pm
Reception 5:30 pm • Dinner & Entertainment 6:30 pm

Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church
20104 Center Street • Castro Valley, CA 94546

~ FEATURED GUESTS ~

Mark Stavropoulos
IOCC Chairman of the Board

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

Come and celebrate IOCC's 25th Anniversary and learn about ongoing humanitarian programs in Greece, Syria, Ethiopia, and around the world

Sponsorship opportunities and tickets
at \$65 per person are available at:

iocc.org/rememberinghome

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Questions? Contact the church office at office@coresurrection.org

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2017

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Oct. 29 - Martyr Anastasia • 9 AM, Baptism of Moses Morgan • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church Sch • Noon, Agape Meal • 5 PM, Honoring the Saints | 30 | 31 | 1 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck, Talk on the Old Believers by Fr Edward | 2 • 5 PM, “Angels Unawares” | 3 | 4 - Kazan Icon • <i>Kazan Skete, 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy</i> • 3:30 PM, Catechism: <i>The Human Being</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers |
| 5 - Unmercenary Healers • 9:30 AM, Catechumen reception • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church Sch • Noon, Agape Meal | 6 | 7 • 6 PM, Great Vespers | 8 - St. Michael & Angels • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck, Talk #2 by Fr Edward | 9 • Noon, Senior Lunch <i>Fr Lawrence at Pan-Orthodox Retreat until Friday evening</i> | 10 | 11 • 3:30 PM, Catechism: <i>On Sin</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers |
| 12 - St. John the Merciful • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church Sch • Noon, Agape Meal | 13 | 14 | 15 <i>Beginning of the Nativity Fast</i> • 6 PM, Vespers | 16 | 17 | 18 • 3:30 PM, Catechism: <i>On Jesus the Son of God</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers |
| 19 - Martyr Barlaam • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church Sch • Noon, Agape Meal | 20 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Feast of the Entrance | 21 - Entrance • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Entrance of the Theotokos | 22 • 6 PM, Vespers | 23 - Thanksgiving Day • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and Akathist “Glory to God” | 24 | 25 • 3:30 PM, Catechism: <i>On Jesus the Savior</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers |
| 26 - St. Innocent of Irkutsk • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal | 27 | 28 | 29 • 6 PM, Great Vespers | 30 - St. Andrew • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 8 PM, Cantiamo Concert | DECEMBER 1 • 8 PM, Cantiamo Concert | 2 • 3:30 PM, Catechism: <i>On Repentance and Faith</i> • 4 PM, Children’s Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers |

USHERS: *Nov. 5*—Martin Thong and Elsie Avalon; *Nov. 12*—John Gilluly and Roz Andronico; *Nov. 19*—Shannon Winterton and Ted Dechant; *Nov. 26*—Alexandra Marino and Preston Booker