



St. Michael the Archangel Serbian Orthodox Parish Newsletter April 2014

Christ is Risen!

Saturday Vespers 6:00 PM
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10 AM

Website: www.easternorthodoxchurch.org

"...Pascha means the crossing-over...For it was on this day that the Children of Israel crossed over out of Egypt, and the Son of God crossed over from this world to His Father. What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate Him Whom you worship; that is, unless you cross over from Egypt, that is, from the darkness of evildoing to the light of virtue, from the love of this world to the love of your heavenly home?"
St. Ambrose of Milan

April: Important Church Dates:

Sunday 6th – The Venerable St. Mary of Egypt.

Monday 7th – **Annunciation of Our Most Holy Theotokos.**

Sunday 13th – **Palm Sunday.** The Triumphal Entry.

Friday 18th – Great & Holy Friday –

† 9 AM - Royal Hours

† Set up tomb around noon – **please come help**

† 5 PM - Vespers with Procession

Saturday 19th – Great & Holy Saturday –

† 10AM - Vespers followed by Baptism (Lisa Crafts)

† 11:30 PM - Matins followed by Paschal Divine Liturgy (Bring your Easter baskets to be blessed)

Sunday 20th – **PASCHA** - 3 PM Agape Vespers Service and Parish Picnic at Edgewater Clubhouse

(111 Edgewater Dr. in Madison, AL)

Sunday 27th – St. Thomas Sunday.

Offerings: Remember to use envelopes, and include your name, so that the treasurer may credit you with your donations.

Confessions: may be heard Saturdays after Vespers; also Sunday mornings before Divine Liturgy 9:40 am-10 am or contact Fr. Gregory to arrange a time. Please come early on Sunday mornings so we may start Divine Liturgy on time.

Note from the Kitchen: Please only make full pots of coffee using the plastic pitcher next to the coffee pot. When you try to make a ½ pot, it comes out as a full pot, because there is a reserve in the coffee pot reservoir, and then the next person that makes coffee only gets a ½ pot.

Church Cleaning: Will be held on **April 12th at 9:00AM.** Michele Platt will open the church for cleaning. Attendance has been low, and we could really use the additional help. Please come help beautify our church.

Coffee Hour: (*Lenten Fast)

*April 6th – Jokich

May 4th – Lee

*April 13th – Kendall

May 11th – Pastrick

April 20th – **Holy Pascha**

May 18th – Pickle

April 27th – Kioutas

May 25th – Platt

Church Needs: Heavy duty plastic spoons are needed for Coffee Hour. If you can donate some, it would be very much appreciated!

Russian School: will meet Saturday, April 5, April 12 & April 26 at 11:30AM. Contact Elena Lee (lanaLee10@aol.com) or Alexandra Pickle (Alexandra.pickle@gmail.com). Everyone is welcome to participate.

Sisterhood Meeting: Thursday, April 10 at 6:00 PM.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

God Grant Them Many Years!

Birthdays

6th – Nicko Kioutas

14th – Matushka Ann Schultz

15th – James Huron

17th – Elena Lee

19th – Mike Jokich

20th – Sandy Ellis

27th – Zoe Zarzaur

Anniversaries

27th – Ted & Debbie Gulas

Thank You:

- For everyone that made donations in honor of Mary Kochoff and Milka & James Taylors wedding.
 - Judith Platt (Don's sister) in honor of Mary Kochoff
 - Kathy Thomas in honor of Mary Kochoff
 - Hal & Vivian Pastrick in honor of Mary Kochoff
 - Summersgill in memory of Mary Kochoff
 - Joe & Helen Bergantz in memory of Mary Kochoff
 - Leposava Prokic (Milka Taylor's mother) in honor of Milka and James' wedding.
- To Loren Capsopoulos for the donation of pussy willows for Palm Sunday; to everyone who contributed to purchase lilies for Pascha; and to Elena Lee & Alexandra for their donation of flowers.

Community Events/Bulletin Board

There will be a special choir practice on Thursday, April 10th at 7pm to practice music for Pascha.

Prayer List:

Please keep in your prayers

Living: Church Members: Sandy Ellis (recovery from surgery), Vangie Pamfilis, Milka Taylor (recovery from surgery).

Friends of Members: Danny, Jean, Donna, Doug, John, Rachel, Demi, Anne, Joanne Karas, Glen, Janet Burn's daughters Rebecca and Kara, and granddaughter Victoria. Jim Smith (Catechumen Lisa Crafts' father).

Reposed: Mary Kochoff, Mary, Sam, Frances, Joe, Anne, Stan, Daniel, Anna, Fryni, Nelia, Natalie, Olga Hansen's father, Dragan, and Harold (Ray's dad) and Taylor Keesling (grand niece of Roger Ellis).

Church Council – 2013 to 2014

Father Gregory Schultz – Parish Administrator

Hal Pastrick– President

Bob Zarzaur – Vice President

Joe Bergantz – Treasurer

Michele Platt – Secretary

Members at large – Sandy Ellis, Mike Jokich, Rick Kaiser, Charles Malmede, Marshall Standifer

Choir Director: Sandy Ellis

Ass't Choir Director: Mat. Ann

Sisterhood President: Shellie Kioutas

Website Coordinator: Vicki Kendall

Librarian – Leslie Hargrave

Sunday School Coordinator: Mat. Ann

Church Supply Coord.: Tatyana Malyrenko

News Items - Please send church news items to the Newsletter Editor: Rick Kaiser at rkmk2012@gmail.com

Other News:

We now have our new telephone line set up at the church. The number is:

256-881-2449

In addition, this month we will begin having office hours at the church.*

Tuesday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Wednesday: 12 noon – 6:00 pm

Thursday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

**Please note: while Fr. Gregory will normally be at the church during these times, pastoral needs will be given priority (i.e.; when someone is ill, etc.). If you need to see him, it is recommended that you call ahead.*

Sisterhood News:

Three members of our St. Sophia Sisterhood, Shellie Kioutas, Olga Hansen and Matushka Ann Schultz attended the National Sisterhood Conference this past month. It was held at the Monastery of New Gracanica, headquarters of our Midwest Archdiocese just north of Chicago, IL. The sisters were very warmly received by the other participants and were given a hearty round of applause when it was discovered that they had traveled so far to attend! New friendships were made and our local Sisterhood was strengthened by learning more about the work the other Sisterhoods around the Archdiocese are doing in their churches.



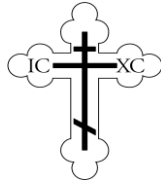
Congratulations to new Catechumen Loren Capsopoulos!



Fr. Kevin & Fr. Gregory on Sunday of Orthodoxy



Sunday of Orthodoxy reception: Church Council Presidents, Bruce Tiller and Hal Pastrick



The Spiritual Journey from Egypt to the Promised Land

At this time we all look forward to completing the fast of Great Lent, the services of Holy Week and celebrating the Bright Resurrection of Christ—the Feast of Feasts: Pascha! The Feast of Passover or *Pesach* as it's called in Hebrew, and *Pascha* in Greek, signifies the “crossing-over” from the worldly life to the spiritual life. Just as the people of Israel were led out of the bondage of Egypt and followed Moses in the wilderness for 40 years on their journey to the Promised Land, so the 40-day fast of Great Lent is intended to be for us a means of spiritual purification and renewal to prepare us to enter more deeply into that spiritual promised land on the Feast of Pascha.

Many Holy Fathers have seen in Moses, a prefiguring of Christ. Moses gave the Commandments of the Law to the chosen people of Israel and Christ fulfilled that Law and calls us to an even higher standard of spiritual life to repent of our sins, forgive one another and love one another. Moses fasted for 40 days on Mt. Sinai and renewed the covenant of the Law; Christ fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, overcame the temptations and began His saving ministry for us all.

Archbishop Andrew Rymarenko once referred to the fast of Great Lent as a kind of “spiritual academy which will reveal to us the laws of life and the laws of our heart which we need so much.” When one is a student and attending school, in order to learn the lessons properly and pass the tests, we must attend the classes, pay attention and study the textbooks. So it is with the spiritual academy of Lent. In order to derive the spiritual benefit that we very much need, it is not enough to simply avoid meat and dairy products alone. There are those who do not even believe in God and yet observe a vegan diet for health reasons or because they are animal rights advocates.

In the Gospel of Matthew 5:20 the Lord said, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* This was because the scribes and Pharisees fulfilled only the external, moral aspects of the commandments, but neglected the spiritual practice and understanding of them. This is why during Great Lent, we must make an effort to attend as many of the church services as possible, pay attention to all that is given us—the prayers and readings, and take time to study the Scriptures and writings of our Holy Fathers. This is why the book “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” by St. John Climacus is appointed to be read each year during Great Lent.

We're all familiar with recordings of ‘the greatest hits’ of some popular band or even classical composers. Great Lent, in a sense, could really be considered ‘the greatest hits’ of the spiritual life! The Sundays before Lent remind us to repent of our sins: Zaccheus the tax collector who repented by giving away all his wealth to those he had wronged and to the poor; the Publican and the Pharisee who demonstrated how we must not be proud in our outward accomplishments, but that within our hearts, we must be humble and confess our sins before God if we wish to be justified; the Prodigal Son, who having acknowledged his sinfulness makes up his mind to return to his Father in repentance; the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Forgiveness Sunday) that admonishes us with a vision of the dread Day of Judgment that we will each encounter, but also teaching us to forgive one another so that God will forgive us.

Then, the Sundays of Lent teach us about the Triumph of Orthodoxy and the proper veneration of Holy Icons; St. Gregory Palamas who confirmed the importance and practice of spiritual prayer; Adoration of the Cross in which we see how we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ; St. John Climacus and the Ladder of Divine Ascent which teaches us how to struggle against the passions and sins with God's help and to acquire the virtues; and St. Mary of Egypt who gave us great consolation by showing us that no matter how great our sins and weakness are, if we do all we can to repent, there is nothing that God cannot forgive.

We have been given this opportunity of spiritual renewal and our Holy Church calls us to do all we can to take advantage of this opportunity. Our merciful God knows how weak and sinful we are, and yet He calls us to make the effort to be obedient to His commandments. Let us fulfill our duty to keep the fast, come to as many of the Church services as possible and pray at home as well, do good deeds, come to Holy Confession and receive absolution for our sins, participate in Holy Communion and forgive and love one another. Then Pascha will be for us a true crossing over to the blessings of the spiritual Promised Land! May God bless you always!

+Fr. Gregory