



SAINT MARY OF EGYPT ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA NEWSLETTER - MAY 2010

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Regular schedule of services

Sunday

- 9:40 AM Hours
- 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Monday

- 9:30 AM Molieben

Tuesday

- 9:30 AM Akathist
- 7:00 PM Catechumen/Seeker class at Starbucks

Wednesday

- 7:00 PM Daily Vespers

Thursday

- 7:40 AM Hours
- 8:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Friday

- 9:30 AM Prayer Service

Saturday

- 4:30 PM Confessions
- 6:00 PM Great Vespers

Check the website for up-to-date times!

May Feasts and Events

- May 1st – Family Night
- May 2nd – Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
- May 9th – Sunday of the Blind Man
- May 12th – Leavetaking of Pascha
- May 13th – The Ascension of our Lord
- May 14th – Ancient Christianity Afro-american Conference
- May 16th – Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council
- May 23rd – Holy Pentecost & PanOrthodox picnic
- May 30th – All Saints



PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION ARE NEEDED FOR:

- The Orthodox Church in America
- Our Holy Synod; Metropolitan Jonah; Archbishop Dmitri; Archbishop Seraphim
- Metropolitan Theodosius
- Mother Seraphima; Deacon Lazarus
- Deacon Kevin, Kamilla Joy, Justin Peter, Abigail Marie, Symeon Basil and Miranda Rose Smith
- The newly illumined Peter and Juliana
- Our catechumens: James and Elizabeth; David, Elizabeth and Calvin; Gabriel; Melissa
- Niphon, Theophila and Xenia; Father Thomas and Matushka Angela Alessandroni
- Julia; Mary Stepura; Tatyana Anikin and her children
- Demetrios, Tamara, Maura Faith, Caroline Hope and Thomas Reilly Pridmore; Gayle Brown
- All Seminary students from the Diocese of the South;
- Lottie Sivulich; Dena Smith; Gordon and June Smith (Fr. Peter & Mother Terri's families);
- Mary Kowalski (Mother Terri's aunt);
- Phyllis and Paul Skiba and family- especially Dan, Sharon, Lara Olivia and Alex;
- Veronica Noble and her family, especially her mother Irene Watson;
- Phil Tikhon, Hugh & Susan, Jody and the Mattox family;
- All Missions and Mission Stations in the Diocese of the South;
- Nicholas and Xenia; Vyacheslav, Yelena, Didima and Sophia Jaravine;
- Karl; Christian, Holly, and Chloe
- Elaine Calugar and family, Carole, Kevin Koers;
- Aunt Gert, Anya, Peter, Timothy; Cristian, Alexandra and Andrea Nicole;
- Jan and Ron Arrington, Melissa McKoy;
- Anna, Victor; Tanya and family - especially Veronica;
- Patricia, Carolyn, Thomas, Photini and Sophia;
- The Coulter family – especially Michelle's mother Beatrice; Marie George
- Sasha, Natalie and their family; George, Anisoara, Cristian and Greg Drinceanu;
- Chaplain Fr. George Hill, Michael Ephraim, and the faithful of the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment serving in Afghanistan
- Photini; Mary; Nasco and Nicole; Moses; John;
- Scott Jason, Megan Elizabeth and Coleman Patrick;
- Vincent, Margaret and the Garland family
- Royce; Chrisoula and Sophia; Patrick; Donna
- Ed, Allan; Pauline; Anthony as he searches for employment
- Todd, Mathew and Kimber and her mother; Rocio and Richard
- All those who have suffered and/or are suffering at the hands of others;

IN MEMORY OF THOSE DEPARTED THIS LIFE IN THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION:

- Thomas
- All those who are victims of the evils, oppressions, violence and terrors of the world
- All victims of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing and Religious Persecution, especially those in Kenya and Indonesia
- All the persecuted Christians in India, Iraq and Jerusalem
- Those who have lost their lives as a result of abuse at the hands of others;
- The souls of all aborted or stillborn children.



Pentecost ***From The Orthodox Faith***



In the Old Testament Pentecost was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so

Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the new covenant of the Messiah, the passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the "exodus" of men from this sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the "new law," the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ.

When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:1-4).

The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came on the day of Pentecost (*Jn 14:26, 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5*). The apostles received "the power from on high," and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the birthday of the Church.

In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fulness of the Godhead is manifested with the Spirit's coming to man, and the Church hymns celebrate this manifestation as the final act of God's self-disclosure and self-donation to the world of His creation. For this reason Pentecost Sunday is also called Trinity Day in the Orthodox tradition. Often on this day the icon of the Holy Trinity -- particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith - is placed in the center of the church. This icon is used with the traditional pentecostal icon which shows the tongues of fire hovering over Mary and the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of "cosmos," the world.

On Pentecost we have the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God mystically present in this world in the Church of the Messiah. For this reason the fiftieth day stands as the beginning of the era which is beyond the limitations of this world, fifty being that number which stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment in Jewish and Christian mystical

piety: seven times seven, plus one.

Thus, Pentecost is called an apocalyptic day, which means the day of final revelation. It is also called an eschatological day, which means the day of the final and perfect end (in Greek *eschaton* means the end). For when the Messiah comes and the Lord's Day is at hand, the "last days" are inaugurated in which "God declares: ... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (*Acts 2: 1 7; Joel 2: 28-32*).

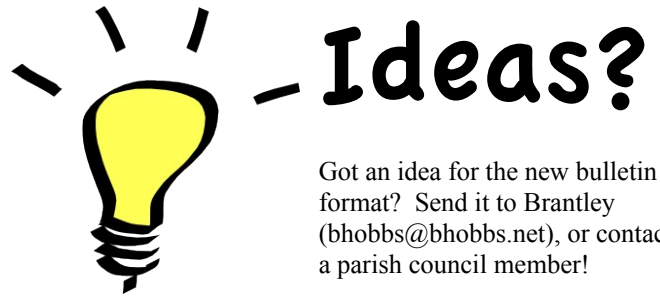
Once again it must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." God's Spirit dwells in us (*Rom 8; 1 Cor 2-3, 12; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2-3*). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us.

The Divine Liturgy of Pentecost recalls our baptism into Christ with the verse from Galatians again replacing the Thrice-Holy Hymn. Special verses from the psalms also replace the usual antiphonal psalms of the liturgy. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit's coming to men. The kontakion sings of the reversal of Babel as God unites the nations into the unity of his Spirit. The troparion proclaims the gathering of the whole universe into God's net through the work of the inspired apostles. The hymns *O Heavenly King* and *We have seen the True Light* are sung for the first time since Easter, calling the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us", and proclaiming that "we have received the heavenly Spirit." The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the "life creating Spirit." In Hebrew the word for Spirit, breath and wind is the same word, ruah.

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee (Troparion).

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he divided the nations. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit! (Kontakion)

The Great Vespers of Pentecost evening features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since Easter. The Monday after Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the feast of All Saints. This is the logical liturgical sequence since the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this is the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. "Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy" (*Lev 11:44-45, 1 Pet 1:15-16*). ✠



Got an idea for the new bulletin format? Send it to Brantley (bhobbs@bhobbs.net), or contact a parish council member!

Sayings of the Fathers

Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honour your patience.

- St. John of the Ladder ✠

From the Heart: Resting in the Ascension

By Douglas Cramer

Summer is almost here. It's a good time to just take a deep breath, and relax. You know, go to the beach if you live close to it, have a barbeque, invite some friends over. I remember doing this on a grand scale as a child growing up in New Jersey. But how often do most of us do this anymore? We're so busy, we've forgotten that true rest and relaxation, the kind that really restores you, is vital to our survival.

This week the Church celebrates the Ascension of our Lord, and our worship since Pascha has been rooted in our joy in the Resurrection. In the light of this glorious, peaceful and fulfilling period of the calendar of our Church we should be totally relaxed and fully in the presence of our Lord. But we still struggle to relax and unclench, to be at peace.

Why? In part, because we live our lives in a kind of emotional and spiritual shallows. We're so busy, we don't pause to reflect, to listen, to understand our motivations. We are busy for busyness's sake. We allow others to set our timetable. We often aren't aware of the reasons we have for doing what we do. We all act a little crazy sometimes, bustling about with all our tasks and projects and responsibilities. It's important for us to act. But it's just as important for us to relax, to quietly find our center, to understand what's driving us to do what we do, to make sure that our choices and actions flow from our deepest values.

How do we turn this around? We start from the heart!

Know Thyself

The Psalms focus this teaching in to a single verse: "Seek peace and pursue it." We need peace, but we must be active to find it—we must seek and pursue. What does this mean? What is this pursuit? St. Isaac of Syria teaches us the answer: "Enter eagerly into the treasure house that lies within you, and so you will see the treasure house of heaven. The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your soul. Dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which you are to ascend."

Seek. Pursue. Enter. Ascend. I'm winded just reading this list. However, this is the language of peace. Jesus Christ proclaims: "The kingdom of heaven is within." We are called to go within, to find our heart, our center, our soul. And to begin our journey there.

The classical philosophers of Greece understood this basic truth of our humanity even before the birth of Christ. The central teaching of Plato, of Socrates, is "Know Thyself." We must get out of our inner shallows, our superficial sleepwalking through life. We're called to wake up, to dive deep.

This isn't easy. Indeed, it's the work of a life time. So, we just start wherever we are, and work through our stumblings. St. Isaac also said, "There is no virtue which does not have continual struggle yoked to it." Or consider how the abbot of a monastery once answered a question about what the monks do all day: "We fall down and we get up, we fall down and we get up..."

We're all swamped by too much information. There's an Orthodox saying that through most of the 20th century the devil tried to overcome the Church by repressing information, by making it impossible for people to hear God's Word. And sadly, this is still happening in many places. But, the saying goes, today the devil has changed his strategy—he's trying to flood us with words and ideas, with too much information, trying to make it impossible for us to find God's Word amidst all the distraction.

But this doesn't have to stop us. Elder Paisios, a great 20th century teacher of Mt. Athos, taught that we must be like bees. A bee will find the one flower in a field of dung, Paisios said. The problem is we often act like flies instead, who find the one pile of dung in a field of flowers. God's will is our flower. We need to question and seek within ourselves, and find Him.

It's Easy To Go Wrong

The reading from the Gospel of St. John for the Sunday of the Blind Man (John 9:1-38), the Sunday before Ascension, lay out just how easy it is to get caught in the thickets of bad motivations, of how lost people become by trying to do the right things for the wrong reasons. And of how the solution is to remain centered in the peace of Christ.

Why are we doing what we are doing? Know thyself, find the treasure house, and you will find the source of right reasons.

The story of the Blind Man shows us the contrast between being centered in the peace of Jesus Christ, and being lost in a confusion of thoughts and unquestioned assumptions and motivations. Christ corrects his disciples misunderstanding that the man was born blind as a punishment from God. Christ teaches them the plain truth: "I must work the works of Him who sent Me ... I am the light of the world." He is light. He is clarity. He is our center and source, the rock on which we can stand firm.

He restores the blind man's sight. And immediately, in rushes more confusion as the crowds try to figure out what happened, finally getting the Pharisees involved. You can hear the arguments running thick and heavy, the raised voices and the lack of peace among all the parties involved—even the blind man's parents, who try to avoid getting drawn in to the

courtroom drama over Christ's miracle. Yet the man born blind ultimately triumphs by remaining centered in Christ. He knows himself. He knows the truth—that he was born blind, and that Christ healed him. And in knowing himself, he finds himself on the path of Christ. With no one standing with him, he speaks from his heart and tells the Pharisees: "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." The final scene is of his victory, worshipping Christ and proclaiming "Lord, I believe!"

We so often don't know why we do what we do. We're distracted by too much information. We haven't ventured deep in to ourselves. We may be doing good works, but are we doing them for the right reasons? Our salvation depends on the answer. So we all need to relax. To unclench. To seek peace.

Once we turn our attention towards seeking peace in our hearts, we can take that seeking with us to Church. Pursue your peace there. The Church is your gateway. We need community, yet we are fractured by loneliness. But we were not meant to be alone. The whole New Testament is built around the work of the Holy Spirit to create this new community, the Church, to show the world just how people are supposed to be community together. A person who puts his or her best energies into knowing God will discover that God, as Trinity, is *the* model for community. But knowing God isn't the same as knowing about God. A relationship with God is not simply an intellectual pursuit. It requires opening your heart to an intimate knowledge of God founded on personal communion with God Himself.

The Church is the gateway to the Kingdom. It is also the image of the Kingdom—it is our treasure house. So draw on the treasures in our worship, our Scripture, our icons, our music, our prayer, our theology. Use these treasures on your journey, on your pursuit to peace. Come to this refuge, and depart refreshed. ✠

Announcements

Area Events

- **Ancient Christianity Afro-american Conference – May 14 – 16, 2010** Anniston Alabama. This conference is sponsored by the brotherhood of St. Moses the Black. The conference theme is "Jesus Christ, The Great Physician". The keynote speaker is His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah. Registration begins 5/14/2010 at 11:00 am. The conference fee is \$40. Scholarships are available. The location of the conference is: St. Luke Orthodox Mission, 1425 Woodstock Ave, Anniston, AL 36207. For more information, please contact the mission of St. Luke at (256) 237-0251.



SMEOC

May 2010 (Eastern Time)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 Sunday of the 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine	26 9:30am - Moliebe	27 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Vespers for	28 Midfeast of 10am - Divine 7pm - Daily	29 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine	30 9:30am - Various	1 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great
2 Samaritan Woman 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine	3 9:30am - Moliebe	4 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechume	5 7pm - Daily	6 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine	7 9:30am - Various	8 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great
9 Sunday of the 9am - Choir 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine	10 9:30am - Moliebe	11 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Vespers for	12 Leavetaking of 10am - Divine 7pm - Great	13 ASCENSION OF 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine	14 9:30am - Various	15 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great
16 Fathers of 1st 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine 1pm - Parish	17 9:30am - Moliebe	18 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechume	19 7pm - Daily	20 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine	21 9:30am - Various	22 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great 6pm - Vigil for
23 HOLY PENTECOST 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine 12pm - Vespers of 5pm - Pan- 6pm - Pan-	24 9:30am - Moliebe	25 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechume	26 7pm - Daily	27 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine	28 9:30am - Various	29 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great
30 ALL SAINTS 9:40am - Hours 10am - Divine	31 9:30am - Moliebe	1 9:30am - Akathist 7pm - Catechume	2 7pm - Daily	3 7:40am - Hours 8am - Divine	4 9:30am - Various	5 4:30pm - Confessi 6pm - Great

