

THE PARISH NEWSLETTER MARCH 2017

The Nativity of the Mother of God Russian Orthodox Church
617 Sand Creek Road, Albany NY (518) 869-3932

A parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad www.albanyrocor.org

Rector: Protopriest Alexis Duncan ; Protopriest Michael Fritz

Protodeacon: Fr. Michael Soloviev

GREAT LENT BEGINS - MONDAY FEBRUARY 27th

MARCH NAMESDAYS

12	Kira Milas	26	Nikifor Popov
	Kira Stabinsky	30	Fr. Alexis Duncan
14	Antonina Shevtchuk		Alex Nikiforov
18	Conon (Conner) McClure		Alexey Vepritsky
18	Ciaran Fitzpatrick		Patrick Soloviev
19	Helene (Jean) Henry		Patrick Henry
23	Victoria Alieva		

MNOGAYA LETA! MANY YEARS to all of our Parishioners celebrating their Namesday in the month of March.



CHURCH FRESCOES

Matching Fund

Thank you to all of our parishioners who participated in the matching Fund to raise money for our Fresco Fund. We were able to raise **\$12,772.90** and are able to pay Father Theodore for the work that he completed on this trip. Not only do we have to pay Fr. Theodore, we also need to pay for the scaffolding that was used.

Thank you to the matching sponsor who helped our Parish reach this goal. May God Bless you all.

PROJECT TIKHVIN AND THE TIKHVIN GALA DINNER



Thank you to everyone who helped make our Project Tikhvin Gala Dinner a great success - especially Matushka Anna, John & RaeLynn Gonyea and Christina DiLello. With Dinner tickets, Bar Sales and Chinese Raffle we were able to raise approximately \$4000 to help with the expenses of sending our youth to Russia to help rebuild the monastery of the Entrance of the Most Holy Mother of God in Tikhvin. Thank you to everyone who helped with the Tikhvin Gala Dinner, with organizing, set up, wait staff, bar tenders, and the raffles. Thank you to all of our parishioner and friends who attended the event. We also sold 50-50 Raffle tickets to benefit our Fresco Fund and were able to raise \$500.

CHURCH CHOIR



The following dates we will have rehearsal, in preparation for Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha:

General guideline (with exceptions) : We will have practice every Monday night at 7 PM, starting on Feb 6 and continuing through Holy Week. (all at 7 PM, in church):

NO practice Monday, Feb 27 (first week of lent, we have church instead)

Monday, Mar 6; Monday, Mar 13; Monday, Mar 20; Monday, Mar 27; Monday, Apr 3

The following Monday, Apr 10 is already Great Monday, so we do not have practice that week.

A quick word on expectations:

I expect everyone to be in attendance to each rehearsal if they would like to sing during Holy Week and Pascha. If you have a legitimate reason why you cannot make a rehearsal or two, that is understandable. I ask that you contact me directly to notify me that you will not be in attendance. Otherwise, I expect the full choir at each rehearsal. This is the most liturgically important time of the year. We have much to prepare for, in order that the services are sung with the level of attention, reverence, and beauty that is required.

Thank you!. Niki Schuler

BLINI - Sunday, February 26th

Thank you To Mat. Cecelia Soloviev and Alex McClure for making all of the Blini for our Parish Blini Lunch. Thank you to the Hostesses responsible for the dinner and to all of the people who donated the other food to accompany the Blini, desserts and beverages. Thank you to Anastasia and John Gonyea for manning our Beverage and Caviar table. Thanks to everyone who helped stay and clean-up after the lunch. A good time was had by all.

PUSSYWILLOWS

With the warm weather that we have experienced the last few days, Deacon Father Michael noticed that the pussy willows are ready to bloom. We are asking our parishioners to please cut the pussywillows when they are ready and store them in a cool, dry place. Please do NOT place the cut pussywillows in water for they will bloom and start to grow roots. Thank you.

SYNODAL YOUTH CHOIR WEEKEND

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE - On Bright Friday, April 21st, the Synodal Youth Choir will be performing a concert at our Parish. We are hoping that both Metropolitan Hilarion and Bishop Nicholas will be joining us on that weekend. On Friday early evening, a Vigil service will be held at our Church. Following the Vigil, the concert will be held at the Community Reformed Church right down the street from our Church. After the concert a dinner will be held at our Church hall. Liturgy will be held on Bright Saturday at our Church and another luncheon will follow at our Church Hall. More information and details will be available in the April Newsletter.

DONATIONS FOR UKRAINE

We were able to collect 22 boxes of clothes, linens blankets, toiletries and medical supplies to be sent to the Ukraine. Tasia Fedorov contact Father Vasyl Dovgan of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Old Calendar) in Troy, NY, has accepted all of our donations and will be sending them directly to the Ukraine. Thank you to the St. Nicholas Parish in Troy for taking on this undertaking in helping the suffering people in the Ukraine.

PASSION WEEK (Holy Week)

A Scripture Lectionary of the Parables, Epistles and Gospels

A 79-page spiral bound book is available for sale at the Starosta stand that contains all of the Parables, Readings, Epistles and Gospels that are read during Holy Week. The cost of the book is \$15.00 and all proceeds will go to the Fresco Fund. There is a limited number of books available. This is a great book to have so you can follow with all of the readings that take place during Holy Week. It is suggested that once you purchase the book, please write your name on the cover, so it will not be misplaced. If there is great demand for the book, more copies may be made.

PASCHAL SALE

This year Orthodox Pascha and Western Easter fall on the same day which makes it difficult for us to prepare food and have our usual "Big" Sale. The Sisterhood will be making Kulich and Chocolate Eggs. An order form will be e-mailed to our Parishioners in the near future. Anyone wishing to order Kulich and or Eggs is requested to please fill out the form and return the form to RaeLynn (Anastasia) Gonyea so the orders may be filled. If you have friends or co-workers that have ordered in the past, please give them copies of the order form as well.

In addition to the Kulich and Chocolate Eggs we have Stollen for sale. We have Marzipan filled Stollen and Cherry filled Stollen. We have a limited number of stollen available. If anyone is interested in purchasing a Stollen (\$10.00) please contact RaeLynn (Anastasia) Gonyea. Thank you!

BAPTISM & MARRIAGES

Congratulations and Mnogaya Leta to Irina and Steve Miller who were married on Sunday, February 12th.

Congratulations to Stanislav Grebenyuk who was baptized on Sunday, February 19th, to his parents Liya and Igor Grebenyuk and big sister Emiliya, Godparents Vladimir Usov and Olga Parella. Mnogaya Leta!

NEW PARISHIONER'S

You may have noticed some new faces in Church. Please welcome these people to our parish - make them feel welcome. Sit with them during Coffee Hour, tell them about our Sisterhood, Church School, Choir etc. Be friendly, so these people will be glad to return.

ANNUAL GENERAL PARISH MEETING

We request that ALL parishioners attend the General Parish Meeting so they may be informed as to the current status of the Church and the Parish as a whole. Please be advised that in order to take an active role in the Parish and to vote on issues during the meeting, you must be a member of good standing in the Church. To inquire as to how to become a member of the Parish and to pay your Church Dues, please contact the Church Treasurer Natasha Smelova smelova@yahoo.com.

We all hope the parish will be there when we need it (for prayers, marriages, funerals, baptisms, etc.). By joining you show your visible support of the parish which nourishes you and your family spiritually. Through the payment of membership dues we pay our Clergy's salary, the upkeep of the Church (Electricity, Heat, Gas, etc.), and also for any repairs that may be needed.

The monthly dues for 2017 for anyone 18 years old and over are:
\$20 (employed adults) (\$240 a year)
\$10 (retired persons) (\$120 a year)
\$5 (students and non-working adults) (\$60 a year).

Together with paying your Church Dues, please consider making a monthly pledge to the Church Mortgage Fund. We have approximately a \$5000 mortgage payment a month, and we need everyone to help pay for our beautiful church. Thank you for supporting your parish.

LENTEN LECTURE

The Lenten Lecture will be held on the Sunday of the Cross, March 19th, following the Divine Liturgy and Coffee Hour. The speaker and the topic of discussion has not yet been set. Once the information is obtained an e-mail will be send to parishioners advising them of same.

UPDATED PARISH DIRECTORY

The Parish Council would like to update our parish directory. We would like to add e-mail addresses for our parishioners. We have been blessed with new families joining our parish and would like to include them on our e-mail mailing list so they will be aware of any parish news. Please contact Tasia Fedorov with any updated information: if your address has changed, if you are new to the parish or have a new phone number or e-mail address. I will try to contact people during Coffee hours to get their updated information. If you know someone new to the parish, who may not be on or e-mail list, please tell them to contact Tasia - thank you.

CHURCH SCHOOL CLASSES

Church School classes are held EVERY Sunday and we hope ALL of the children of our Parish will participate in the classes. If you are interested in enrolling your child in Church School, please speak to Mat. Anna for more information. If anyone is interested in teaching Church School as a regular teacher or substitute, they are asked to contact Fr. Alexis. Adult discussion groups also take place during the same time as the Church School classes. Church School classes are held BEFORE Liturgy (8:30 AM) on the first and third Sundays of the month - since we have Sisterhood and Council meetings on those Sundays. On the second, fourth and possibly fifth Sunday of the month, classes are held after Coffee Hours.

FASTING GUIDELINES DURING GREAT LENT

We Orthodox Christians, in obedience to the words of our Divine Savior, and in imitation of the saints, set aside a period of intense fasting and prayer in order to purify our spiritual senses so we may see the Holy Resurrection. Following the traditions handed to us by the saints, we abstain from all meat products, all dairy products, eggs, fish and olive oil the entire period of lent. Those who believe that we fast strictly only for the first and last week err and are not in accord with the teaching of the saints. We may have olive oil on Saturdays and Sundays and any day there is a Polyeleos. We may partake of fish only on the feast of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday.

Only those who are ill or for medical reasons are unable to fast are excused from this God-pleasing struggle. And those people may discuss the matter in confession. Children also fast to their ability, again, discussed privately with the spiritual father. Married couples may not have physical relations the entire of Great Lent. Televisions should be either unplugged or severely limited with no worldly music allowed. Families should gather in prayer more frequently and attend as many church services during the week as they possibly can. Holy Communion and Confession should be observed weekly.

To break the fast is a matter for repentance and confession. To do so by accident is understandable. To knowingly break the fast with no regard or as though fasting were unimportant is definitely a sin which must be confessed.

We can always develop elaborate defenses against fasting, but in the end, if fasting were not vital for our spiritual development, the Lord and His saints would not have commanded it. Some will say that fasting is a matter for monastics. They do not speak the truth. History shows a long practice of strict fasting for all Christians. We may say that fasting is a tool, and not the goal of the spiritual life. But, what physician would perform surgery without the beneficial use of an antiseptic or without washing his hands? What carpenter would build a house with no hammer? What gardener would tend his crops without implements? What Christian would advance to the heavenly kingdom without prayer and fasting?

The Sundays of Great Lent

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent possesses special meaning for us as we journey through the Lenten season to Pascha, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through our awareness of these days and our participation in the liturgical services of the season, we are instructed and inspired to continue our journey with Christ to the Cross, and ultimately to victory over sin and death. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great will be celebrated on Sundays during the Fast at 9:30 am.

Forgiveness Sunday (February 26):

Great Lent begins on a Monday. The eve of this day is known as Forgiveness Sunday. The way to resurrection and life, the path to Christ's eternal victory over death, begins with forgiveness. God will not forgive us our sins, and raise us from the dead to eternal life, unless we forgive the sins of others and work for their salvation as well as for our own.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ clearly teaches us the importance of forgiveness: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6: 14-15).

Sunday of Orthodoxy (March 5):

On the First Sunday of Great Lent, we celebrate the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. This is an historical feast commemorating the restoration of icons — which had been banned for years from the Churches — to their rightful liturgical use in the year 843 A.D.

The major emphasis of this feast is the victory of the true faith, the victory which always ultimately triumphs. Having completed the first week of our Lenten efforts, we are reminded that Christ, the perfect image (icon) of God the Father, calls us to personal victory by restoring within ourselves "the image and likeness of God" in which we were first created (Genesis 1:26).

The icons of our Lord, the Theotokos (the Mother of God), and all the saints are images of true humanity, signs of our eternal calling and vocation. They tell us that we are all called to be living icons and imitators of Christ, bearing the likeness of God as gracious vessels of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas (March 12):

The Second Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated to St. Gregory Palamas (14th century). He was a monk on Mt. Athos — a spiritual bastion of Orthodox Christianity — and later became the Archbishop of Thessalonica. Once again we are reassured, as we contemplate this man and reflect on his teachings, that we can indeed attain salvation and behold the "Light of Wisdom," by becoming

“partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

St. Gregory clearly teaches that by cooperating with the God who makes all things possible, we can attain eternal life. Thus, our Lenten efforts are confirmed, our resolve is strengthened, and we are filled once more with the light of hope. Historically, theologically, the support of Palamas’ teachings is seen as a Second Triumph of Orthodoxy.

Sunday of the Cross (March 19):

On the Third Sunday of Great Lent we venerate the Life-creating Cross of our Lord. The Kingdom of God comes only through the Cross. Life follows death; Resurrection follows Golgotha.

St. Paul mentions that, in the worldly sense, the Cross is a sign of foolishness, signifying for many only death and sorrow. The faithful, however, look in faith and hope beyond the suffering brought about by the Cross, discerning the loving victory which it truly proclaims. At the Sunday Matins service we sing, “Behold! Through the Cross joy has come into all the world.” The Cross is a sign of victory and the landmark of paradise. It is inseparable from the Resurrection. For this reason we sing on this Sunday: “Before Thy Cross we bow down and worship, O Master, and Thy Holy Resurrection we glorify.”

The Cross is not only a victory for Christ, “the captain of salvation made perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2:10). The Cross is a victory for us as well. As we approach Pascha, it stands as a reminder for us to take up our crosses and worthily follow Christ in His suffering and, ultimately, in His eternal victory (Matthew 10:38). On the Third Sunday of Lent the Cross is placed before us in the center of the Church, adorned with flowers, for inspiration and encouragement.

Sunday of St. John of the Ladder (March 26):

On the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent we commemorate St. John of the Ladder (7th century), author of The Ladder of Divine Ascent and abbot of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mt. Sinai. In his spiritual classic St. John outlines the steps essential for attaining communion with God, steps which remind us that the way to the Kingdom constantly challenges us to engage in spiritual warfare.

“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6: 10-13).

St. John is also commemorated during Lent as a model of ascetic effort.

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt (April 2):

The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent is dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt (4th & 5th centuries). St. Mary was a harlot who, having recognized her sinfulness, sought to bring about an essential change in her life. She ran from her sinfulness and devoted the remainder of her life to placing God's will above her own. In her person we recall Christ's words: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31).

The end is drawing near, yet repentance is still possible, even for the greatest of sinners. We see how the harlot repents and is forgiven. There is no sin so great that God will not forgive it; there is no amount of sinfulness which can condemn you if you are willing to repent and to merge your vision with that of our Lord.

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him" (Psalm 103: 8, 11-13).

Palm Sunday (April 9):

Great Lent ends on the Friday following the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt. The next day is Lazarus Saturday which is followed by Palm Sunday. These are days of festal interlude, leading us into Holy Week. On Palm Sunday we greet Christ as King, anticipating the glory of Pascha (Easter). We hold branches in our hands as we sing, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!" At the same time we look ahead to the road to Golgotha upon which Christ invites us to join Him. While we sing praises with our lips, our lives must not cry out with the angry mob: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

With this in our minds and in our hearts, we enter the days of the Passover of the Cross — the great and holy Pascha of the Lord — the Resurrection.