

Holy Scripture Lessons for the Day

Epistle Lesson: St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians 8:8-13;9:1-2

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Gospel According to St. Matthew 25:31-46

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

O Lord and Master! O God of heaven and earth! Show Thy favour and open to me the door of repentance, I pray Thee with mine afflicted soul. Regard me according to Thy great mercy; incline Thine ear to my prayer and forgive me, who am guilty of falling into many sins; forgive me all of the wretched things I have done, for I have been conquered by my own evil will. St. Theophan the Recluse

Devote yourself to stillness and know that I am God - Psalm 45:10 (LXX)

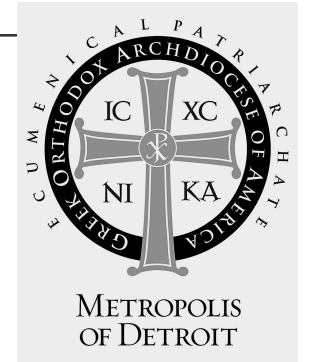
Traverse City Orthodox Mission Church

Traditional Worship for Modern Life

Volume III Number 8 - Sunday, 22 February 2009

PARISH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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| Sunday, 22 February | Sunday of the Last Judgement. Meat Fare Sunday. 9 am Orthros 10 am Liturgy of St. Chrysostomos 11:30 am Fellowship Hour–Meatfare Potluck Meal |
| Monday, 23 February | St. Polycarpus, Bishop of Smyrna. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. |
| Tuesday, 24 February | First and Second Finding of the Head of the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist, John. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. |
| Wednesday, 25 February | St. Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. |
| Thursday, 26 February | St. Photini, the Samaritan Woman. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. |
| Friday, 27 February | St. Prokopios, Confessor of Decapolis. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. |
| Saturday, 28 February | 2nd Soul Saturday. St. John Cassian. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. 9 AM Orthros and Liturgy of St. Chrysostomos (Petoskey) 4:30 PM 9th Hour and Vespers 5:30 PM Choir Rehearsal Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve From Paradise. Cheese Fare Sunday. St. Eudokia the Martyr. Fast Day-Dairy, Fish, Wine and Oil Permitted. 9 am Orthros 10 am Liturgy of St. Chrysostomos 11:30 am Fellowship Hour–Cheese Fare Potluck Meal 1 PM Vespers of Forgiveness |
| Sunday, 1 March | |



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Strategic Planning Meeting Sunday, 8 March. Our parish will have its second in a series of meetings aimed at developing a strategic plan on the first Sunday of Great Lent immediately following the Holy Services. The first meeting was held on Sunday, 15 February and at that meeting over 34 people participated in an activity to help us begin the process of developing a vision and mission statement for our parish. Stephanie Long gave a thorough overview of the strategic planning process as relates to our church. Fr. Iakovos gave a presentation focused on explaining the importance of God's action in this process. He highlighted that our purpose in working through this process is to try and discern God's will for our parish, articulate that understanding of will and pursue it in our decision making and prioritization of tasks as we make our forward into 2009. Attendees were challenged to begin to seek God's will by heightening their participation in the time-honoured traditions of the Church including, intensified prayer, fasting and almsgiving. With the beginning of the Great Lent looming ahead of us, this is a wonderful time for us to undertake this type of work. The group then split off into smaller discussion groups of four or five persons each in order to begin work on coalescing around a vision. After about twenty minutes of brainstorming each group had an opportunity to present their work for consideration. This process will be repeated many times over the next several months as we attempt to develop a clearer sense of who we are as a parish and where we are headed. Critical to the entire process is the participation of as many "stakeholders" as possible. This is why you are cordially invited to join us at our next meeting and help with the process. For more information, please feel free to contact Stephanie Long, Holly Olszewski or Fr. Iakovos. See you on the 8th!

Fasting Regulations for Great Lent—It Really Is All About the Food; Or Is It?. Like most Orthodox Christians, we recognise that Great Lent signifies the beginning of a great struggle. One week from today the world-wide Church will embark upon a titanic struggle. It is a struggle in which we attempt to reassert control over our passions. It is a struggle that animates the Church and makes her militant. We go on the offensive against our enemy. The key to this process is summed up in the three-fold practice of fasting, prayer and almsgiving. During Lent we will have the opportunity to practice the discipline of fasting on many occasions. Yet there remains confusion about fasting during this season for some strange reason. In a nutshell, we can understand these requirements like this: This Sunday is the last day for eating meat and meat products. Meat will not be permitted again until we celebrate Pascha on 19 April. During this week, beginning tomorrow, we are to abstain from all meat and meat products. We are permitted, however, to have dairy products, fish, wine and oil throughout the upcoming week. With next Sunday, these foods will also be prohibited. Fish will be permitted once during Lent—on the Feast of the Annunciation (and in some traditions on Palm Sunday). Wine and Oil will be permitted on most Saturdays and Sundays of the season. In addition to the restriction of the types of food in our diet we are also to restrict the quantity of food. The Holy Fathers say that we should always leave the table a bit hungry. This makes us more likely to be successful in our prayer-life and spiritual exercises.

In addition to fasting from foods, we are instructed to abstain from entertainments and other diversions which take our attention away from Christ. This creates an excellent opportunity to simplify one's life by merely paring down the things that occupy our time. Everyone in our parish is responsible to try and comply with the discipline of the Church during this holiest of ecclesiastical seasons. For more information on this and establishing your Lenten observance, parishioners are encouraged to speak with Fr. Iakovos. Lent begins one week from Monday, so make your plan NOW!

Vespers of Forgiveness Next Sunday. Our Lenten observance will begin with the celebration of the Vespers of Forgiveness next Sunday following the fellowship hour. This important service is the signal that the Lenten struggle has begun. The climax of the service is the Rite of Mutual Forgiveness which takes place at the end of vespers. In

this rite, the priest asks forgiveness of each person individually and then each person attending the service asks forgiveness of the other until everyone has forgiven each person everything. It is only then that we can begin our Lenten journey—only after we have forgiven. Please make it a point to start your Lenten observance by attending this moving and most beautiful service.

Holy Liturgy Service In Petoskey This Saturday. Special services will be offered at the Bridge Street church in Petoskey this coming Saturday. Orthros begins at 9 AM with the Holy Liturgy to follow immediately after. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Sunday of the Last Judgement. The Gospel lesson for the day is Christ's parable of the Last Judgement. When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable answers: love—not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous "poor," but concrete personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life. This distinction is important because today more and more Christians tend to identify Christian love with political, economic, and social concerns; in other words, they shift from the unique person and its unique personal destiny, to anonymous entities such as "class," "race," etc. Not that these concerns are wrong. It is obvious that in their respective walks of life, in their responsibilities as citizens, Christians are called to care, to the best of the possibilities and understanding, for a just, equal, and in general more humane society. But Christian love as such is something different, and this difference is to be understood and maintained if the Church is to preserve her unique mission and not become a "social agency," which definitely she is not.

Christian love is the "possible impossibility" to see Christ in another man, whoever he is, and whom God, in His eternal and mysterious plan, has decided to introduce into my life, be it only for a few moments, not as an occasion for a "good deed" or an exercise in philanthropy, but as the beginning of an eternal companionship in God Himself. For, indeed, what is love if not that mysterious power which transcends the accidental and the external in the "other" and reaches the soul, the unique and uniquely personal "root" of a human being, truly the part of God in him? If God loves every man it is because He alone knows the priceless and absolutely unique treasure, the "soul" or "person" He gave every man. Christian love then is the participation in that divine knowledge and the gift of that divine love. There is no "impersonal" love because love is the wonderful discovery of the "person" in "man," of the personal and unique in the common and general. It is the discovery in each man of that which is "lovable" in him, of that which is from God.

The parable of the Last Judgment is about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for "humanity," yet each one of us has received the fit and the grace of Christ's love. We know that all men ultimately need this personal love—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that men are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied them. And finally, we know that however narrow and limited the framework of our personal existence, each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ's love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged. For "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me..."

*Adapted from the book **Great Lent** by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann*