

### The Task of Each Christian

*"When did I see You hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or imprisoned....In that you had not done it to the least of these My brethren, you have not done it to Me" (Matthew 25:44,45)*

In my first year of seminary I discovered volumes of a Russian Orthodox layman, Nicolai Berdyaev in the shelves of our library. I devoured them because I found him addressing so many spiritual questions that were on my own mind. He had a way of getting to the core of so many problems that any serious Christian -- indeed, every moral human being -- ought to be mulling over in his or her lifetime before passing on to another realm. One topic he explored that should be challenging us all is the focus on social welfare that our Lord put so radically in the above parable found in Matthew 25.

Berdyaev stated that all of us ought never to rest content while evil persons suffer in Hades. We are gifted with moral consciences, and they are intensified by the Holy Spirit within our souls. We are made to be filled with the love of Christ. That affection for all human beings regardless of their virtue or lack of it ought to stir us to anguish over their situation of separation from

the heavenly Father. Berdyaev wrote: "Moral consciousness began with God's question: 'Cain, where is your brother Abel?' It will end with another question on the part of God: 'Abel, where is your brother Cain?'"

Put another way, who can say that he or she will be capable of enjoying paradise content with having accomplished all that was possible while on earth as long as there are those who were exiled to wherever it may be or whatever state of existence may happen to befall those who spent their lives in sin? Of course it may be argued that the same chapter in Matthew speaks of a clear separation between sheep and goats. How to reconcile these apparently conflicting predictions of the end of time? We might comment that if freedom has any meaning, it must allow us real choices and not what would be a game that the Lord plays with us, ending as an object lesson and permitting all who ever lived a free pass to paradise.

Or we can say that love will always trump justice. If God is love as we are told in the Johannine writings, surely He will find some way to express that love and apply it to all human beings. These comments are found in the writings of our Church teachers and argued over time and time again. And yet the struggle for universal salvation will go on, with at least some reluctant to accept a general definition of truth, justice and love that affects the outcome either or both ways. Some, like the brilliant third century theologian Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, plead for mercy for the sinners in Hades. They have the feeling that the love of the Holy Trinity will so infiltrate the souls of the most hardened of sinners, including Satan himself, that at the end there will be a glorious reconciliation of all of them with the saints and "good angels," because the Divine Majesty demands it.

The Church has rejected such theology not because she has any less mercy and compassion, but on the basis of freedom -- both angelic and human. If free will means anything, it has to take



into account the option of rejecting grace, love and the will of the Almighty. In other words, is it possible to say "No" to the Lord's plan for the restoration of all creation and living things? Put another way, the God of love can do no other than to pour out His love onto all beings. For most, it will be a warm welcome way to praise the Holy Trinity for all eternity. For others, it will be like the blazing heat of the desert against which one can only try to shield the eyes and try to survive by ignoring God's brilliant presence.

*\* This article is from the OCA website (www.oca.org), a section entitled: Reflections in Christ Articles. Father Berzonsky writes a weekly series of pastoral reflections along with Father Breck. Visit this section often!*

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## A Special Ministry

The Gospel encourages us to be active in our Christian life, especially in the Parable of the Last Judgment. One of the things we are encouraged to do is to visit the sick. If we do not know the individuals well or feel tentative to visit them, a card or short note would be greatly appreciated. Also, speak to Father Alexander if you have any concerns. Here are some of the parishioners of St John's who would benefit from your prayers and well wishes:

Mary Michalko  
Brookdale Place of San Marcos  
1590 West San Marcos Blvd  
San Marcos, CA 92078  
760-471-9904  
(Call ahead for visit)

Mary Ellen Mishler  
Villa Pomerado  
15615 Pomerado Road  
Poway, CA 92064  
858-613-4545  
(Family requests limited visitors)

Mary Stankovich  
12740 Gateway Park Road  
Poway, CA 92064  
858-385-0690

Lenke Vietorisz  
St Paul's Medical Center  
235 Nutmeg Street  
San Diego, CA 92103  
619-239-8687



**Diocese of the West  
Annual Assembly  
Protection of the Holy Virgin  
Orthodox Church  
Santa Rosa, California  
October 14-16, 2009**

## Orthodox Etiquette

### "What do I wear to Church"

Remember when the Church was often referred to as the "House of God?" We have lost the sense of holiness, not only in relation to the church building, but also anywhere in our life and society!

In the 'good old days' people used to put on their 'Sunday best' to go to church. In fact, dress clothes were often referred to as Sunday clothes. In fact, all too often, dress in church has become too casual. In all areas of our lives, we should offer Christ our best. And the same is true of our dress. We should offer Christ our 'Sunday best', not our everyday or common wear. And we should dress modestly, not in a flashy way that would bring attention to ourselves. Our dress should always be becoming of a Christian - especially at church.

Here are some specific guidelines we should use in our parishes:

#### Children

Only young children should wear shorts to church - and then only dress shorts. Athletic shorts, cut-offs, and spandex shorts are never appropriate church wear (for children or adults!). Shoes or sandals should be clean and tied. No one should

wear T-shirts with any kind of writing on them ("This Bud's for You!" is definitely out).

#### Women

Dresses should be modest. No tank tops or dresses with only straps at the shoulders, no short skirts (mini-skirts), and no skin-tight dresses. Dresses should have backs and not be cut low in the front. If women wear pants to church, they should be dress pants (not jeans, leggings, etc.). Shorts of any type are not appropriate for church.

#### Men

Men should also dress modestly. While coat and tie are not mandatory, shirts should have collars and be buttoned to the collar (the actual collar button may be left undone, but two or three buttons undone is inappropriate). Slacks should be cleaned and pressed. Jeans (of any color) are too casual for church, especially ones with patches or holes. Again, shorts are not appropriate church wear.

If you're going somewhere after church where you need to dress casually, bring a change of clothing with you and change after coffee hour. Remember, use your best judgment and good taste when dressing for church. After all, you don't go to be seen by everyone else - you go to meet and worship God.

## Did You Know?

The Fasting Discipline of the Orthodox Church includes the following:

**Fasting Seasons:** 1) Great Lent & Holy Week; 2) The Apostles' Fast; 3) The Dormition Fast; and, 4) Advent or the Nativity Fast.

**Fast Days:** 1) ALL Wednesdays and Fridays during the year except during fast-free weeks; 2) The Eve of Theophany [Jan 5]; 3) Feast of the Beheading of St John the Baptist [Aug 29]; 4) Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross [Sept 14]; and, 5) the Eve of the Nativity of Christ [Dec 24].

**Fast-Free Weeks:** 1) Post-Feast of the Nativity of Christ to the Eve of Theophany [Dec 25 — Jan 4]; 2) Week following the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee [pre-Lenten celebration]; 3) Bright Week; and, 4) the Week following Pentecost.

It is essential for all Orthodox Christians to have a good calendar to be reminded of the above!

## Special Occasions

### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

3rd — Dave Hogben; 8th — Masha Sokolov, Paul Kopcha and Stephen Zmina Jr; 9th — Ed Lump; 12th — Challen Henry; 14th — Anna Chkhikvishvili; 16th — Bill Moision; 20th — Sarah Oftedal and Mary Ellen Mishler; 26th — Nina Stone and Makayla Kedroff Ward..

### SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

1st — Vivian and Tom Mazzola; 6th — Kelly and David Martot.

May God grant you MANY YEARS!

## It's A Girl

**Congratulations** to Kelly and David Martot on the birth of their daughter, Anna Angela Christine, on Thursday, August 20, 2009 — weighing 7 lbs and 20 in long.

(Kelly and David were married at St John's last September and are living in Paris, France.) May God grant Anna and her parents MANY YEARS!



## Newly Weds

**Congratulations** to Amy Whyte and Ted Tarris who were united in Holy Matrimony at St John's on Sunday, August 23, 2009.

We were blessed to have Ted's father, Archpriest Eugene Tarris from Denver, Colorado and Ted's uncle, Archpriest Joel McEachen from Ansonia, Connecticut to concelebrate this wonderful event.

[No picture available; perhaps we can get one for next month's newsletter.]

## Adult Education Ministry

The Adult Education Ministry will resume in September after having a month off during the summer. The theme for the next 4 sessions will be:

### "The Bible — An Orthodox Perspective."

We will have an overview of the Old and New Testaments. We will also discuss certain passages from the Bible as taught by The Fathers Of The Church. The main goal will be to give everyone a framework from which a parishioner would be able to better understand Scriptures when reading the Bible. The other goal would be to learn how the Fathers interpreted and taught the Bible.

The theme for session #1 is "**Survey of the Bible.**" Mike Pichette will teach this session. Mike will give an overview of the Old and New Testaments and how they relate and complete each other.

For session #2 we will discuss the significance of certain biblical issues. We will discuss the spiritual meaning of Egypt and Jerusalem as the Fathers explained them. We will answer such questions as "what is



the significance of Exodus and why was it necessary that Jesus Christ would go to Egypt?" Shehadeh Khoury will teach this session.

Shehadeh will also teach session #3, the title of which is "**The Fathers'**

**interpretation of Bible parables.**" We will discuss the interpretation of the Good Samaritan and other parables.

Session #4 will conclude our discussion of the Bible by learning how to reflect on the scriptures and the personal lessons we will take from our daily Bible reading. Mike will teach this session.

The classes are open to all St. John Of Damascus' parishioners. We will hold our first session on Saturday September 12, 2009. The sessions will begin at 8:00 and conclude at 9:30. Attendees are encouraged to stay after the sessions to share socially as well as ask any questions they have. We will provide snacks as well as coffee, tea, and juice drinks.

Our first series on Prayer was very well received. We would like to encourage everyone's participation as we grow together in holiness and in seeking God's plans for our lives.

### Mark Your Calendar!

St John of Damascus will host an

# International Festival

Saturday, October 17, 2009

Ethnic Foods! Music! Games! Crafts!

Get involved! Steve Drexler, Chairman

# St John of Damascus Orthodox Church

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## September 2009

website: [stjohnofdamascus.org](http://stjohnofdamascus.org)

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
		<b>1</b> Beginning of a new Church Year	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>  6:00 pm Great Vespers
<b>6</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy  Church School Registration	<b>7</b>  7:00 pm Great Vespers	<b>8</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Nativity of BVM  7:00 pm Parish Council	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>  Adult Education 8 am – 9:30 am  6:00 pm Great Vespers
Reader: David Sanders Coffee Hour: Oftedal, Telles, Wesdell						
<b>13</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy  Church School Begins  6:00 pm Great Vespers	<b>14</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Exaltation of the Cross	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  6:00 pm Great Vespers
Reader: Sue Yingst Luncheon: Franchak, Sanders, Swinehart, Zmina						
<b>20</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Followed by Church School	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 8 am Nut Rolls  Adult Education 8 am – 9:30 am  6:00 pm Great Vespers
Reader: Steve Drexler Coffee Hour: Dubney, Klavzar J, Strateff						
<b>27</b> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Church School and Picnic	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			
Reader: Shehadeh Khoury Coffee Hour: Alex, Klavzar E&V, Yingst						
			<b>CANDLESTAND</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> George Shumaik 13 <sup>th</sup> Steve Zmina 20 <sup>th</sup> Wayne Henry 27 <sup>th</sup> Mike Wesdell	<b>GREETER</b> Mike Kapsimalis Gary Jollie Levan Darjania Ed Klavzar	<b>PROSPHORA</b> Pat Swinehart Steve Brown Ken Telles Birdie Worth	