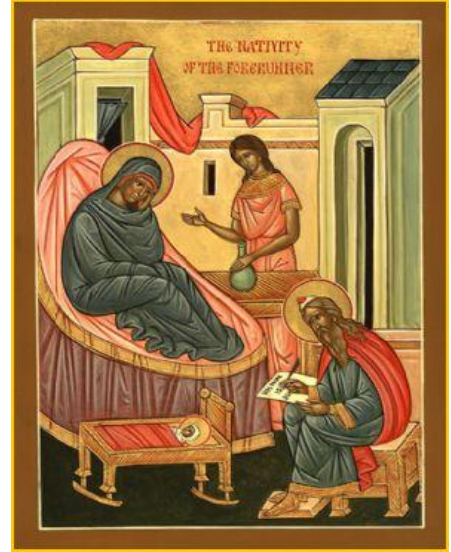


The Voice In The Wilderness

*"A voice crying in the wilderness:
Prepare ye the way of the LORD..."*
Matthew 3:3

The Newsletter of St. John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, an Orthodox Christian witness to Cedar Park and Central Texas. Saint John the Forerunner Antiochian orthodox Church is a local parish of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America and is in the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America.



Volume 5 Number 8

March 2007

The Great Lent



Icon for the Sunday of the Holy Cross,
celebrated the Second Sunday of Great
Lent

The season of **Great Lent** is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man's entire life, which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

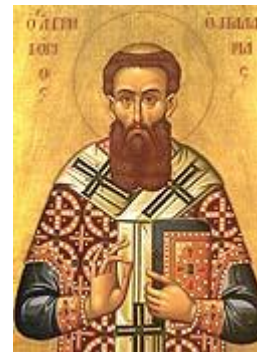
In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to "anoint our faces" and to "cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls." The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

Let us begin the Lenten time with delight...
let us fast from passions as we fast from
food, taking pleasure in the good words of
the Spirit, that we may be granted to see
the holy passion of Christ our God and his
holy Pascha, spiritually
Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the
illumination of our souls has shown forth;
behold, now is the acceptable time; behold,
now is the time of repentance (Vesper
Hymns)

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection

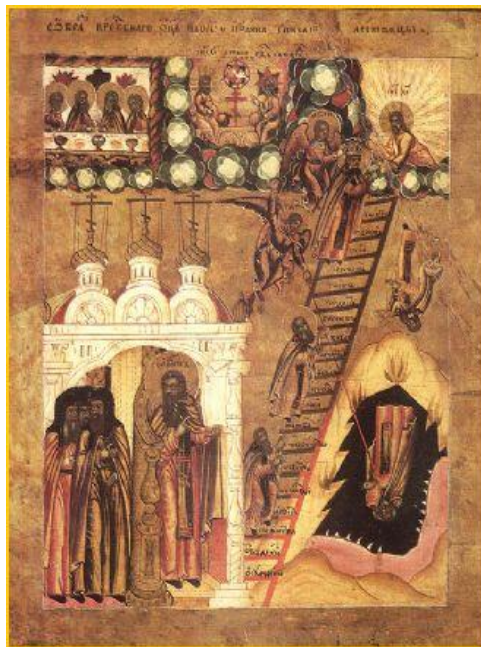
The Second Sunday of Lent ---The Sunday of St Gregory Palamas

The Second Sunday of Lent, March 4, 2007 is the commemoration of **St Gregory Palamas**. It was St. Gregory (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.



The Third Sunday of Lent ---The Sunday of the Holy Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the **Veneration of the Cross** is on March 11, 2007. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of Great Lent not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (*Mt 10:38*). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved (*1 Cor 1:24*).

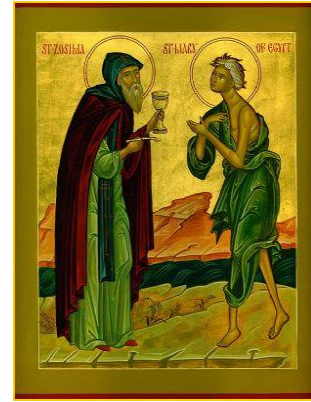


Fourth Sunday of Great Lent--- St. John Climacus (Mark 9:17-31).

This Sunday, March 19, commemorates St. John of the Climax (6th century) who is the writer of the book called The Ladder (*climax*) of Paradise. This book contains 30 chapters, with each chapter as a step leading up to a faithful and pious life as the climax of a Christian life. The spirit of repentance and devotion to Christ dominates the essence of this book, along with the monastic virtues and vices. He was an ascetic and writer on the spiritual life as a monk-abbot of Sinai Monastery. These steps of the ladder as set forth by St. John are to be practiced by the Christian especially during this period of the Great Lent. Each step leading to the top step of the ladder, is the climactic essence of the true meaning of a Christian life.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT ST. MARY OF EGYPT (Mark 10:32-45).

This Sunday, March 25, commemorates the life of St. Mary of Egypt, who is a shining example of repentance from sin through prayer and fasting. She lived a sinful life for many years, but was converted to a Christian life. She went into the wilderness to live an ascetic life for many years, praying and fasting in repentance of her previous sinful life, and dying there. St. Mary's life exemplifies her conviction about Christ, which motivated the changing of her life from sin to holiness through repentance. Her understanding of repentance involved not a mere change from small things in her life, but an extreme change of her entire attitude and thoughts. The Church commemorates St. Mary for her recognition of her own sins as an example of how one can free oneself from the slavery and burden of wrongdoings.



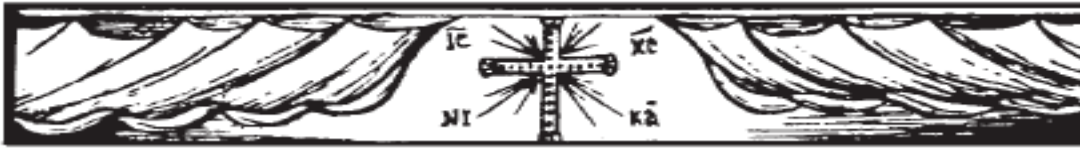
The Icon of the Annunciation



Taking precedence on the 5th Sunday of Great Lent this year is the **Feast of the Lord's Annunciation to the Virgin Mary** on March 25. As this is a Feast of the Lord it takes precedence above all other feasts that fall on this date. The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of St Basil or St John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent. It is one of the two days of Great Lent on which the fast is relaxed and fish is permitted (Palm Sunday is the other).

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as "good tidings." This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of St Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the "beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery," for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God's promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15). St Philaret of Moscow explains that salvation is not merely an act of God's will, but also involves the Virgin's free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God's will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions. May we like the Virgin answer yes to God's call.



THE SOULS ACTIVITY DURING GREAT LENT: Prayer, Fasting , and Acts of Mercy

Almsgiving heals the soul's incensive power; fasting withers sensual desire; prayer purifies the intellect and prepares it for contemplation of created beings. For the Lord has given us commandments which correspond to the powers of the soul.

St. Maximos the Confessor (First Century on Love no. 79)

Great Lent --- It is a time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ It is a time of renewed devotion, of fasting, prayer, and works of mercy. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors. During Great Lent it is a practice of the Orthodox Faith to redouble our personal struggle to live a sanctified life through the worship of the Most Holy Trinity, Prayer, Fasting and Good Works (Philanthropia). If we fast we should use the funds saved to perform acts of Philanthropia---if we cannot fast we should closely examine things in our life that we waste funds upon that could be better directed in acts of Philanthropia.

THE LENTEN FAST

The word "fast" means not eating all or certain foods. As Orthodox Faithful, we can fast completely at certain times of great importance, and especially each time before receiving Holy Communion. Usually, fasting means limiting the number of meals and/or the type of food eaten. Fasting teaches us to depend on God more fully.

There are several benefits of fasting. Fasting helps us pray more easily. Our spirit is lighter when we are not weighed down by too much food or food that is too rich. Through fasting, we also learn to feel compassion for the poor and hungry and to save our own resources so that we can help those in need. An important aspect of Fasting is the giving of alms to the poor and needy during Great Lent and other fasting periods of the church.

Fasting is more than not eating food. Saint John Chrysostom teaches that it is more important to fast from sin. For example, besides controlling what goes into our mouths, we must control what comes out of our mouths as well. Are our words pleasing to God, or do we curse God or our brother? The other members of the body also need to fast: our eyes from seeing evil, our ears from hearing evil, our limbs from participating in anything that is not of God. Most important of all, we need to control our thoughts, for thoughts are the source of our actions, whether good or evil.

Fasting is not an end in itself. Our goal is an inner change of heart. The Lenten Fast is called "ascetic." This refers to a actions of self-denial and spiritual training which are central to fasting. Fasting is a spiritual exercise. It is not imposed or forced upon us. In the same way that true repentance cannot be forced upon anyone, each of us makes the choice to turn away from our sinful ways and go toward our loving, for giving Father in Heaven.

The last Pre-Lenten Sunday is called both *Cheesefare Sunday* and the *Sunday of Forgiveness*. This is the last day dairy products are eaten before the Fast. The Gospel lesson (*Matthew 6:14-21*) read on this day tells us that our fast must not be hypocritical or "for show." Our work and our appearance are to continue as usual and our extra efforts are to be known only by God. The Gospel reading also reminds us that God the Father will forgive us in the same manner as we forgive our brother. With this promise of forgiveness, Great Lent begins on the next day, which is called *Clean Monday*. The traditional Orthodox practice for Clean Monday is to observe a total fast day, in other words--- except for a little water, no other beverages or food are taken.

GENERAL RULES OF THE LENTEN FAST

The Lenten Fast rules that Orthodox Christians practice today were established within the monasteries of the Orthodox Church during the sixth through eleventh centuries. These rules are intended for all Orthodox Christians, not just monks and nuns.

The first week of Lent is especially strict. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, a total fast is kept. In practice, very few people are able to do this. Some find it necessary to eat a little each day after sunset. Many Faithful do fast completely on Monday and then eat only uncooked food (*bread, fruit, nuts*) on Tuesday evening. On Wednesday, the fast is kept until after the Presanctified Liturgy.

From the second through the sixth weeks of Lent, the general rules for fasting are practiced. Meat, animal products (*cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard*), fish (*meaning fish with backbones*), olive oil and wine (*all alcoholic drinks*) are not consumed during the weekdays of Great Lent. Octopus and shell-fish are allowed, as are light vegetable oils. On weekends, olive oil and wine are permitted.

According to what was done in the monasteries, one meal a day is eaten on weekdays and two meals on weekends of Great Lent. No restriction is placed on the amount of food during the meal, though moderation is always encouraged in all areas of one's life at all times.

Fish, oil and wine are allowed on the Feast of the Annunciation (*March 25*) and on Palm Sunday (*one week before Easter*). On other feast days, such as the Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (*March 9*), the Forefeast of the Annunciation (*March 24*) and the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (*March 26*), wine and oil are permitted.

PRAYER

During Great Lent, Orthodox Christians try to redouble their efforts at praying regularly. There are many extra opportunities to enter into corporal or community prayer with the Canon of St Andrew, the Akathist Services to the Virgin Mary, Presanctified Liturgies, and the opportunity to attend those Morning Prayer, Compline, and Vesper Services that we usually don't have time to attend in the non-Lenten period of our life.

This is also a time for us to go to confession. It is a time to forgive those who knowingly or unknowingly hurt us and caused us pain. It is a time to ask others to forgive us for our own actions known and unknown that have caused them pain, sorrow, and hurt. When we have done these things we are ready to make the one of two required yearly confessions of the Antiochian Archdiocese. It is the expectation that minimally every Antiochian Orthodox Christian will go to confession during Great Lent in preparation for Pascha. [Please note frequent Confession is our goal]

The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian is traditionally said many times throughout each day during Great Lent, in addition to our daily prayers. The prayer of St Ephraim is discussed in the Orthopraxis article in this issue.

Philanthropia ---Acts of Mercy and Almsgiving

Just as the poor should give thanks to God and return rich love to those who assist them, so all the more should the wealthy give thanks, for through God's providence they are able to perform acts of charity and so are saved both in this age and in the age to be. For without the poor they cannot save their souls or flee the temptations of wealth.

St. Simeon the New Theologian Practical and Theological Precepts no. 125
Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart

The beginning of love of money is the pretext of almsgiving, and the end of it is hatred of the poor. So long as he is collecting he is charitable, but when the money is in hand he tightens his grip.

St. John Climacus, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent,"

There is your brother, naked and crying! And you stand confused over choice of floor covering.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

Little has changed with mankind in relationship to opening his heart and pocketbook at the same time. St Gregory of Nyssa wrote in the fourth century, "There is your brother, naked and crying! And you stand confused over choice of floor covering." Great Lent is an opportunity for us to open our hearts and pocketbooks to redouble our personal struggle to live a sanctified life through the worship of the Most Holy Trinity by the doing of "acts of Mercy" and "Good Works". In Greek the word used for these actions is Philanthropia. If we fast we should use the funds saved to perform acts of Philanthropia---if we cannot fast we should closely examine things in our life that we waste funds upon that could be better directed in acts of Philanthropia. Here are some worthy charities that are under the control of/or operating with the blessing of Canonical Orthodox Bishops.

Food For Hungry People

Food for Hungry People is an official program of the Archdiocese for raising funds to feed the hungry around us and in the world. It is a responsibility of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, the Adult Fellowship organization of the Antiochian Archdiocese. The main focus of this project is the Annual Great Lent Archdiocese Project, however it encourages the provision of canned goods and funds to local food programs throughout the year and especially during the Nativity Lent period. Our parish does the annual St. Nicholas Project to give canned goods to our local pantry ministry. Here are a few examples of something you can do:

1. One family in our Archdiocese decided to have a meal of RICE once a week during Lent. This is the diet of millions of unfortunate people in the world. The rice was fancied up a bit. When Lent was over, this family decided to continue this practice of serving only rice for dinner. The money they saved was placed in their FOOD FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE BOX. They could have obtained the money by cuffing out some other luxury, but they felt the rice meal helped them identify with those they wished to help.
2. Make an Alms Box and place it prominently so you will remember to give regularly to the poor.

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)

The IOCC is a Pan-Orthodox effort to mobilize all Orthodox Christians to its efforts to bring assistance to the poor throughout the world. IOCC funds programs and co-funds activities through use of its own resources and seeks matching grants. It depends primarily on donations from Orthodox Christians and then seeks out additional funding partners through other Churches in the ecumenical movement, foundations, governments, corporations, and international multi-lateral agencies. IOCC maintains relationships with other institutions so that Orthodox Christian humanitarian concerns and initiatives are appropriately represented. IOCC is registered with the U.S. Agency for International Development and is eligible to receive funds for foreign assistance from the U.S. Government. It is a member of Interaction; a coalition of U.S. based non-governmental organizations that carry out humanitarian assistance programs overseas. This year IOCC has helped Christians in Iraq reestablish and repair their homes, churches, and schools. It has also helped in Eastern Europe and in Palestine, Orthodox Christians suffering from the effects of war, hunger, and unemployment.

You may donate directly to: International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. 110 West Road, Suite 360 | Baltimore, MD 21204 USA Tel: 877-803-IOCC (4622)

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), located in St. Augustine, Florida is the official mission and evangelism agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA). OCMC proclaims and practices the evangelical imperative of the Orthodox faith based on the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who commissioned us to go "and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). OCMC recruits, trains and sends missionaries to preach, teach, baptize and to minister to the poor, hungry, sick, suffering and orphaned. We, therefore, support the development of indigenous leaders and strengthen the infrastructures of churches, especially in, though not limited to, countries where Christianity is a minority, thus creating vibrant, eucharistic Orthodox Christian communities throughout the world. You may sponsor a priest and his family in Africa for as little as \$50 per month.

Orthodox Christian Mission Center, P.O. Box 4319, St. Augustine, FL 32085-4319
Telephone: (904) 829-5132 Fax: (904) 829-1635 E-mailto:missions@ocmc.org

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry

Thousands of families are directly affected every year by having a loved one in a prison or jail. Most of these families are heartbroken and filled with anxiety, yet few receive attention from the Church. Studies show that a family that can stay together and keep in touch with the member in prison will have an important influence on helping that member adjust, both in prison and upon release. The Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) is under the blessing of Metropolitan PHILIP of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. OCPM seeks to serve prisoners and their families through visitation, prayer, correspondence, and literature. OCPM is supported through the donations of caring individuals, including donations for literature, icons and other materials.

Contact Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, Father David Ogan Post Office Box 1600 Elk Grove, CA 95759
Phone: (916) 714-3455 or e-mail <http://www.antiochian.org/Ocpm.html>



Orthopraxis:

The Metania and the Prayer of St Ephriam the Syrian

More than any other season of the Church year, *Great Lent* is a time of humbling ourselves and prostrating ourselves before our God. During *Great Lent*, both in Church and in our homes, one would see Orthodox Christians young and old fall to our knees and then place the palms of our hands on the floor, and touch our foreheads down between them. This is called a *Metania* or "making a prostration." Although you may have seen Muslims praying this way toward Mecca, it is actually a traditional Middle Eastern worship expression was used by Christians for centuries before the founding of Islam.

There are two forms of doing a metania or prostration. [The word **metania**. *Metania* (or metany) comes from the word *metanoia* (Greek μετάνοια)]. The first is commonly known as the small metania or small prostration. It is performed by first making the Sign of the Cross. Then, one bends from the waist, reaches toward the floor with the right hand open and facing outward, and touches the ground. It is used as the substitute for the prostration when it is normally prescribed, but not permitted by the Canons of the Church. The small metania is often used when verenerating an icon and when approaching a hierarch or a priest for his blessing. You may also hear this small metania called by various other names: Lesser prostration, little prostration, small prostration, waist prostration, half prostration, Waist reverence (Slavonic: poiasnyi poklon), little reverence, or the small bow .

The second form of metania is known as the *Great Metania* or Full prostration and more simply called the prostration. The *Great Metania* is an act of distributing one's weight on the knees, feet, and hands, touching the forehead to the floor, staying in the position as long as desired or necessary, then standing up. One usually makes the Sign of the Cross before or after the movement. This physical motion is similar to the Chinese kowtow ("bump head"). Interestingly, the use of the word prostration in this way is different than common English usage, where prostration means to prostrate oneself or lay completely flat. The full prostration is sometimes called kneeling. Again, this word usage is different than the English usage of kneel, which means to distribute one's weight on the knees and feet only. Depending on the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church that you attend, the *Great Metania* or prostration may be called Proskynesis (Greek προσκυνήσις), Great prostration, greater prostration, semi-prostration, Full reverence, great reverence, earthly reverence, "reverence down to the ground" (Slavonic: zemnoy poklon), "Bow to the earth," full bow, large bow, greater penance (metanoia megale), or Panchanga pranam .

The *Great Metania* or full Prostration is associated with penance, submission, and obedience. According to custom and tradition, prostration is assumed at different times in the services and church calendar (e.g. *Great Lent* and the Prayer of St Ephriam the Syrian). The twentieth canon of the First Ecumenical Council forbids kneeling on every Sunday and the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost.

The *Great Metania* is combined with the Prayer of St. Ephriam the Syrian during *Great Lent* to form the most personal act of prayer and humility of the Orthodox Church. The prayer of Ephriam the Syrian, a fourth century hermit is : *"O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of*

sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk." The following is the traditional method of performing the spiritual exercise of St Ephriam's prayer:

The Great Lenten Prayer of St Ephriam

○ Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despondency, lust for power and idle talk.

(Prostration)

But grant unto me, Thy servant, a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

(Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see mine own faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters. For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Prostration)

○ God, cleanse Thou me a sinner *(12 times, with as many bows, and then again the whole prayer from the beginning throughout, and after that one great prostration)*

Building Committee Update

The Peacock has landed! That's right! Next time you walk through the narthex, look closely at the tree that illustrates the progress of our capital campaign: You will see a peacock cavorting in the branches. That means we are right on schedule with our giving—in fact, we are just a bit ahead of ourselves since the fund now has over \$150,000 in it. When another bird appears on the tree, that means we will have reached \$200,000—and remember, the quicker we get to \$250,000, the sooner we will be able to begin construction.

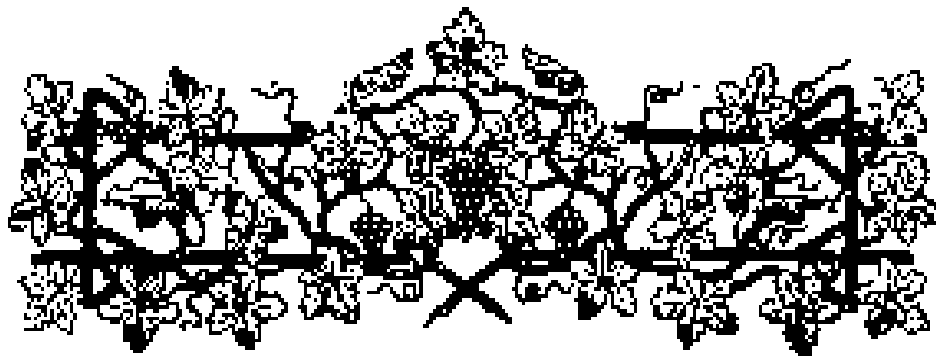
Before you walk away from the tree, do two other things: breathe a prayer of thanksgiving that it is not a thermometer, and also thank the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that we have such a creative group of people on our building committee. Not only are those folks creative, they would also love to visit with you at any time about any facet of the program. So, if you have questions or concerns, just get in touch with Father Deacon Basil, Vera Poe, Bob Bennett, Rob Thurner or Becky Thurner.

The 2007 Parish Council of St. John

Parish Council elections were held at the annual meeting in February. The parish Council meetings are held monthly on the second Sunday after coffee hour, and are open to all who wish to observe. Financials and reports are reviewed at each meeting. Nine of the council members are elected at the Parish Annual Meeting in February, and serve staggered, three-year terms. Three of the members are appointed by the parish priest, and the others serve as representatives of major parish organizations. Some positions are ad-hoc (non-voting).

- Father Aidan Wilcoxson
- Vickie Knight (Treasurer)
- Rdr. Mark Trainer (Bookstore)
- Melinda Treckman (Youth)
- Rob Thurner (Finance Committee Chair)
- Stephen Bodnarchuk
- Baker Galloway
- Patty Lewis (Chair)
- Josie Long (Choir)
- Fr. Deacon Basil Long (Building Committee Chair)
- Vera Poe (Secretary)
- Maggie Benson
- Will Hampton
- Janet Bennett (Facilities Committee Chair)

*From
The
Pastor's
Desk*



I've been talking a great deal about our St Raphael Project, and I want to use this month's column to talk about it some more. The foundation of the project is our outreach series *The Church*. This series consists of four different presentations: there are presentations on Church History, Tradition, Worship, and Salvation. Last year, we presented this series at several local libraries; this year, we are going to present the series in our parish. Last year, we spread the series out over four weeks; this year, we will do all four presentations within an eight hour period, beginning on a Friday night and ending on a Saturday afternoon. Last year, we presented the series four different times; this year, we will present it twice: on Fri-Sat, April 20-21, and on Fri-Sat Oct 5-6. Last year, we relied on newspaper advertising and flyers to attract folks to the program; this year, we are going to rely on the members of our parish to invite their friends, co-workers, family members, and neighbors.

What I specifically want to focus on in this column is how we should go about inviting people to these events. The most important thing we need to do in that regard is to pray for these people. We've been encouraging everyone to keep a list of folks that you'd like to see at these events and to pray daily for the people on that list. We now also have a community list that is kept in a notebook in the nave. We hope that when you come to a service or to the liturgy, you will pick up that notebook at some point and pray through the ninety-plus names that are on the list. The notebook is kept on the window sill that is to the right of the iconostasis; it has a picture of St Raphael on the cover (and if you wish to add names to the list that is in the notebook, please do so).

But in addition to our prayers, we need to be thinking about what we are actually trying to accomplish when we invite our friends and neighbors and co-workers and family members to these events. What I want to encourage you to do is to think of these events as part of a long process. After all, no one becomes Orthodox over-night; the process of being received into the Church is a lengthy one; in fact, from the time most people first walk through the door of our facility, it typically takes between a year and a year and a half before they are chrismated—and that is the fast-track! These outreach events will probably be a significant and strategic part of that whole process, but they do not represent the goal. The goal is for folks to become Orthodox; these events are a means to that goal.

The practical result of all this is that we don't have to pressure folks. We can be relaxed about how we approach people. If they can't come to the event in April, then there is the event in October. If they do attend the event in April, but show no desire to participate in a service, we don't worry; the seed has been planted. So we shouldn't be at all anxious about 'getting' people to these events. We are going to be giving you practical guidance on how to actually issue an invitation to folks, but the main thing right now is to keep praying and to chill out. The Holy Spirit is at work in all of this, and our efforts are a small—though very important part—of a very long process.

an unworthy priest
Aidan +

Preparing the Family for Pascha

Too often Great Lent is seen by families as a series of "shoulds" - we should fast, we should give alms, we should pray, we should go to church more. Perhaps we would do better if we approach our family's Lenten effort from a different perspective. His Grace Bishop BASIL of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America in a recent visit to St. John the Forerunner parish stated that the purpose of Great Lent is to obtain the paradise that our Forefather Adam and Foremother Eve left. With that as our goal, the regaining of "Paradise", let us try for a loving response to what our Lord has done for us.

Step 1: What's Involved in Preparation?

You may begin by asking family members how they have prepared for something important. For younger children a test or a sports competition may be the best comparison reflection. Older youth may identify better with a goal they achieved like a driver's license. Parents may reflect on preparing for their wedding day or the birth of their first child. You may want to guide the discussion so that each family member shares his/her story of preparation. Be sure to ask how each felt during the process and after.

Step 2: What Do We Know About Great Lent?

What does your family know about Great Lent? Originally, Great Lent was the final preparation of the catechumens for their baptism at Pascha. The catechumens would fast, pray, study scripture, and do good works. The rest of the community joined the catechumens as a time for renewing their baptismal commitment to Christ. As society became primarily Christian, the numbers of the catechumenate dropped and the practices of the Catechumenate became the general practice for Great Lent as our personal preparation for Pascha.

Each week guide your children through the themes of anticipation of and preparation for Pascha, these are emphasized in the scriptures and services of the Church.

Scripture

Review the biblical accounts of the Israelites wandering in the desert (Exodus 14-20) and Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). These are traditional biblical understandings of Great Lent. Study some of the Old Testament passages about the Messiah (Isaiah 11, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 9:9, the Book of Jonah, and others).

Worship

Examine the special services and prayers of Great Lent. The Pre-Sanctified Liturgies, the Akathist Hymn, and the Canon of St. Andrew are integral parts of the Lenten liturgical life. Talk about the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim [see above], fasting, and the themes of the Sundays before Lent and during Lent. All of these are part of our preparation for Pascha.

At St John the Forerunner, we have many resources available to help you: The parish newsletter, our parish library and parish bookstore hold a wealth of information, your Priest or Church School teachers. If you have access to the internet, check out the Orthodox web sites on the World Wide Web. www.antiochian.org, www.oca.org, www.goarch.org, and www.theologic.com have wonderful articles and other resources to help you learn and share about Great Lent. Books that you may want

to look into using are: *Great Lent, Of water and Spirit* by Alexander Schmemmann, *The Lenten Spring* by Thomas Hopko, *The Lenten Workbook* [OCEC], the *Orthodox Study Bible*, and others, are available thru Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore in Cedar Park (ask Reader Mark for his suggestions).

Step 3: Focus on the children's response to the message of Great Lent.

You will then be ready for the big question "How will we prepare for Pascha this year during Great Lent?" You will need to decide what you will do as a family and what you will do individually.

Fasting

Bishop BASIL notes that when we are fasting, we are eating the same foods that God gave Adam and Eve to partake of in the Garden of Eden or Paradise. With this in mind, everyone in the family can fast at some level. For small children this may be the elimination of sweets or something that they enjoy on a regular basis. Parents and teens may choose a more rigorous level of fasting. The Church offers the rule to which we strive: no meat, fish, wine, dairy products, olive oil. (Wine and olive oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays.) The degree to which we keep the rule comes with spiritual growth and practice, but it can begin when children are young.

Fasting is not limited to food. Throughout the writings of Church Fathers and Mothers, we read that we must also "fast from the tongue": watch what comes out of our mouths as well as what goes into the mouth. For children this is often the harder fast---how to not say something bad to their brother or sister. This may include "fasting with the arms and legs" by avoiding hitting an irritating brother or sister. They can do "fasting with the eyes", this can be done by limiting TV, movies, and magazine reading during Great Lent.

Worship

Great Lent is the time to increase your family's frequency of attending Church services beyond the Sunday Divine Liturgy. If your family has never attended a Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, decide together to attend, and even to prepare to receive the Eucharist. Preparation to receive the Eucharist includes prayer, fasting and the Sacrament of Confession. Our parish offers the Akathist to the Theotokos and Other parishes that observe the Slavic practice there are alternating Akathists to Jesus and Mary the Theotokos.

In our parish we also pray for the souls of our deceased family members on the Soul Saturdays of Great Lent. In doing so, we are remembering and preparing for Christ's resurrection, so that we can indeed have everlasting life with Him, which is what we pray our family members are experiencing. Before the Soul Saturdays, have the children help you with the list of names of Orthodox family members so that they can listen for them when they are read.[Note that Saturday-of-the-Souls Liturgies where we again pray for the dead vary depending on whether you are in a Slavic or Byzantine parish. Byzantine parishes, like ours, observe them the two Saturdays before and the first Saturday of Great Lent. Slavic parishes observe them on the second, third and fourth Saturdays of Great Lent.] Plan to participate and to bring your list of names to at least one. You may wish to bring a special bread or boiled wheat (Kolliva) for memorials and involve your children in the preparation.

Almsgiving

Encourage the children to save money to donate to a local charity or the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) or Orthodox Christian Mission. They can make and decorate a collection box that can be the visual focus of your effort. You can encourage the children to save from their allowance, gift monies, special treats, or lunches. The entire family can also participate by donating monies they would have spent for movies, video rentals or eating out. In either case, some sacrifice is to be involved.

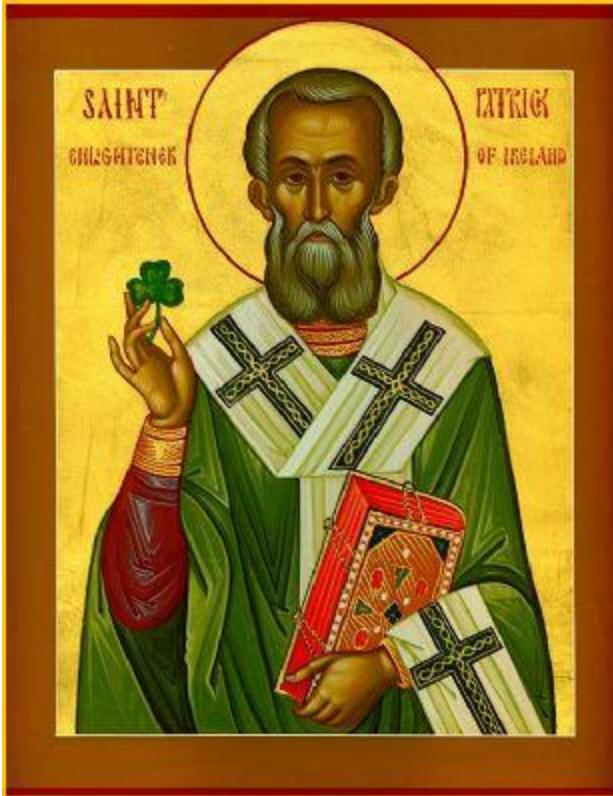
Prayer & Study

It is important to provide time for prayer and the study of a book of the Bible as a family. To do this it will probably be necessary to turn off, or at least, limit the TV. As a family read the *Orthodox Study Bible*, I think you will find that the footnotes and special articles in the Orthodox Study Bible will be of great help to you as you study the scriptures. Available in most secular bookstores are the *Arch Series* that provide children Bible Stories and also have the Paschal story for small children with nice illustrations. I would recommend that you replace some of your secular videos with videos that have a religious story or have a specific moral theme during Great Lent. Consider using this new-found time to play games such as *Bible Pictionary* [Sr. or Jr.], *Bibleopoly*, and Bible trivia games. [Check your local Christian book store for most of these items.]

In closing let me quote the prominent Orthodox lay-theologian, Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div, who has noted that "In a society such as ours that underestimates the value of discipline and obedience, the teachings and practices of the Orthodox Church appear as antiquated and "unnatural". From our perspective this is "the norm"! As St. Paul reminds us, we are to "live in the world" but not be "of the world." Christ wants us to "transform" the world around us. " Let us this Great Lent strive to live "the norm."

This article was based on "A Lenten Lesson: How Will We Prepare for Easter?", The Orthodox Servant (Newsletter of the Department of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese), March 1992, p. 5. the article "A Family Lesson: How Will We Prepare for Pascha?" By Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div on www.theologic.com, and Making Lent Great for your family by Philip Mamlakis PhD March 2003 issue of "The Messenger," a monthly resource publication of the Office of Religious Education, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

The Voice in the Wilderness is published monthly by St John the Forerunner Antiochian Orthodox Church and is free to people who wish to subscribe to the newsletter. To subscribe please contact Subdeacon Thomas Wilson, editor at soctgw@excite.com. Articles are always accepted and may be edited for space or content. The Icons used in ***the Voice in the Wilderness*** are from the following sources: the Private Collection and Library of His Beatitude Metropolitan Theodosius, St Tikhon's Seminary, St Vladimir's Seminary, St Isaac of Syria Skete (www.skete.com). We are thankful for the beauty that they provide in illustrating our Articles. Many of these icons are available thru Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore. We also wish to thank our reference sources: the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America (www.antiochian.org) The Orthodox Church in America (www.oca.org) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America www.goarch.org , as well as other resources noted after the articles.



Monastic Saints to Live By:

**St Patrick,
Enlightener of Ireland
Commemorated on March 17**

Saint Patrick, (celtic *Pádraig*) the Enlightener of Ireland was born around 385, the son of Calpornius, a Roman decurion (an official responsible for collecting taxes). He lived in the village of Bannavem Taberniae, which may have been located at the mouth of the Severn River in Wales. The district was raided by pirates when Patrick was sixteen, and he was one of those taken captive. He was brought to Ireland and sold as a slave, and was put to work as a herder of swine on a mountain identified with Slemish in Co. Antrim. During his period of slavery, Patrick acquired a proficiency in the Irish language which was very useful to him in his later mission.

He prayed during his solitude on the mountain, and lived this way for six years. He had two visions. The first told him he would return to his home. The second told him his ship was ready. Setting off on foot, Patrick walked two hundred miles to the coast. There he succeeded in boarding a ship, and returned to his parents in Britain.

Some time later, he went to Gaul and studied for the priesthood at Auxerre under St Germanus (July 31). Eventually, he was consecrated as a bishop, and was entrusted with the mission to Ireland, succeeding St Palladius (July 7). St Palladius did not achieve much success in Ireland. After about a year, he went to Scotland, where he died in 432. Patrick had a dream in which an angel came to him bearing many letters. Selecting one inscribed "The Voice of the Irish," he heard the Irish entreating him to come back to them.

Although St Patrick achieved remarkable results in spreading the Gospel, he was not the first or only missionary in Ireland. He arrived around 432, about a year after St Palladius left his mission to Ireland and died in Scotland. There were also other missionaries who were active on the southeast Irish coast, but it was St Patrick who had the greatest influence and success in preaching the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, he is known as "The Enlightener of Ireland."

His autobiographical Confession tells of the many trials and disappointments he endured. Patrick had once confided to a friend that he was troubled by a certain sin he had committed before he was fifteen years old. The friend assured him of God's mercy, and even supported Patrick's nomination as bishop. Later, he turned against him and revealed what Patrick had told him in an attempt to prevent his consecration. Many years later, Patrick still grieved for his dear friend who had publicly shamed him.

St Patrick founded many churches and monasteries across Ireland, but the conversion of the Irish

people was no easy task. There was much hostility, and he was assaulted several times. He faced danger, and insults, and he was reproached for being a foreigner and a former slave. There was also a very real possibility that the pagans would try to kill him. Despite many obstacles, he remained faithful to his calling, and he baptized many people into Christ.

The saint's Epistle to Coroticus is also an authentic work. In it he denounces the attack of Coroticus' men on one of his congregations. The Breastplate (Lorica) is also attributed to St Patrick. In his writings, we can see St Patrick's awareness that he had been called by God, as well as his determination and modesty in undertaking his missionary work. He refers to himself as "a sinner," "the most ignorant and of least account," and as someone who was "despised by many." He ascribes his success to God, rather than to his own talents: "I owe it to God's grace that through me so many people should be born again to Him." By the time he established his Episcopal See in Armagh in 444, St Patrick had other bishops to assist him, many native priests and deacons, and he encouraged the growth of monasticism.

St Patrick is often depicted holding a shamrock, or with snakes fleeing from him. He used the shamrock to illustrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Its three leaves growing out of a single stem helped him to explain the concept of one God in three Persons. The story of St Patrick driving all the snakes out of Ireland should be seen as an allegory with the snakes representing the pagan belief in demons and the defeat of the enemies of the Triune God by the work of Patrick who truly gave the light of Christ to all of Ireland.

St Patrick died on March 17, 461. St Columba of Iona (June 9) says that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that Patrick was buried at Saul, the site of his first church.



FOOD FOR THE KINGDOM



The Feast of St. Pádraig, Apostle and Enlightener of Ireland is celebrated on March 17. It always falls during Great Lent. We have several members of the parish who are named Patrick or Patricia and celebrate this Feast as their names-day. Here are two traditional Irish Fasting dishes that can help you to celebrate the feast day of this great Orthodox Saint of the West.

St Patrick's Soup

St Patrick's soup is a soup named in honor for St. Pádraig. It is a modern soup never eaten by St. Pádraig as there were no potatoes in Ireland when St. Pádraig was there. This being said, it is an excellent fasting soup made from potatoes that uses oatmeal for thickening. It is interesting because it does not use milk, the common ingredient in most potato soups eaten in the US. Remember to use Irish oatmeal and not rolled oats when you make this, it is quite different. This soup can be served with warm soda bread for a complete Irish experience!

Ingredients:

2 tbs fasting margarine
1 medium onion, sliced
4 medium potatoes, peeled and finely diced
4 carrots, peeled and finely diced
8oz mushrooms, sliced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb green cabbage, chopped
pinch ground cloves
 $\frac{3}{4}$ pints vegetable stock
4oz oatmeal
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Melt the margarine in a large saucepan. Add the onions, potatoes and carrots and fry gently for about 5 minutes until soft. Add the mushrooms, cabbage and ground cloves and cook for 5 minutes more.
2. Add the vegetable stock and oatmeal, bring to the boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes
3. Allow to cool, then puree in a blender or food processor until the soup is smooth. (If you prefer a slightly chunky soup, just puree half the mixture.)
4. Return the soup to a clean pan and heat through gently. Season to taste. Serve in individual soup bowls.

Oatmeal Scones

These are a delicious breakfast treat or nice as an afternoon tea when friends visit in either fasting or non-fasting times.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup dried currants
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons white sugar
- 1 cup fasting Margarine, cubed
- 1 1/3 cups cold soy milk

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F .
2. Heat the orange juice and the water in a small pan, add the currants. Simmer the mixture for 1 minute, then let it sit until it cools slightly.
3. In a food processor, grind the oats with the flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and sugar. Add the butter. Run the machine in short spurts until the mixture has the consistency of sand. Transfer the mixture to a large mixing bowl.
4. Add soy milk and orange/currant mixture to the large mixing bowl. Stir until the mixture begins to hold together.
5. Form the dough into a large ball with your hands, adding a bit of milk if necessary.
6. Press or roll out the ball of dough until it is 1 inch thick.
7. Cut the dough into 16 squares or triangles.
8. Bake the scones on an ungreased baking sheet for 15 minutes or until they are lightly browned on the edges

ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY NEWS

Special Services:

March 4,11---**Saturday of Souls** Orthos 7 am Divine Liturgy 9 am

March 7,14,21,28---**Presanctified Liturgy** 7 pm

March 22 **Orthros with Great Canon of St Andrew and Life of St Mary of Egypt** 6am

March 2,9,16,and 23 ---**Akathist Service** 7pm

March 24 ---**Great Vespers for the Annunciation** 6pm

March 25 ---**Feast of the Annunciation** Orthros 8 am Divine Liturgy 10 am

March 31---**31 Lazarus Saturday** Orthros 7am Divine Liturgy 9am Great Vespers 6pm

PARISH ACTIVITIES:

Meals for Missions lunch March 11: Our monthly lunch, "Meals for Missions," is held immediately following the Divine Liturgy. This lunch is sponsored by the Women's Group to raise funds for mission trips to be taken by St. John's high-school students: the donations are \$5 per adult and \$2.50 for children 10 and under. *Visitors eat free.*

There are two Orthopraxis Seminars this month. One on **Saturday March 10** will discuss the **Orthopraxis of Great Lent**. The one on **Saturday March 31** will discuss **Holy Week in the Orthodox Church and Pascha**. Both classes will meet at 3pm. Anyone interested in living a more traditional Orthodox life is welcome to attend.

Orthodox Adult Christian Instruction is held every Saturday at 5pm at the Church. All members, Catechumen, and inquirors are welcome to attend.

Sat., May 5,2007, Guest Speaker David Patton, the editor of **DYNAMIS**, the Orthodox commentary on scripture, will be speaking at St. John the Forerunner. We hope people will go ahead and mark their calendars. It will be free, but a free will offering will be welcome to go to the building of our parish hall.

The Book Study will continue reading and discussing THE ART OF PRAYER, which contains excerpts from St. Theophane the Recluse and THE PHILOKALIA. The Group meets at 12:00PM on the first and third Sundays either in the cry room or outside-unless there is a major church conflict

or otherwise announced. Everyone is welcome, and it is not necessary to have read the material before hand-although it is recommended.

FATHER JAMES SHADID and **MRS. GAYLE MALONE** are co-directors of our Diocesan Summer Camp -- **CAMP SAINT RAPHAEL** want you to know that the camper application for the 2007 sessions is posted at <http://campstraphael.org> Parents of all the children and teens in our congregation are urged to complete and submit them ASAP. Remember spaces are reserved on a first-come-first-served basis!

Many Thanks to the folks who supported the Fundraiser for our kids on Sunday, February 25th the Teens hosted the coffee hour. They had a Lenten bake sale with fasting goodies, to raise money to pay transportation costs for parish kids attending Camp St. Raphael in Oklahoma this June.

Soup and Saints will be held on Tuesdays March 6, 13, 20, and 27. Come hear the life of saint, eat one of Reader Mark's great vegetarian/fasting soups, and enjoy the fellowship of others.

Upcoming Event: St Raphael Project and the Outreach Program consists of four different presentations: there are presentations on Church History, Tradition, Worship, and Salvation in an eight hour period, beginning on a Friday night and ending on a Saturday afternoon. The dates for this year are **April 20-21**, and on Fri-Sat Oct 5-6. The St Raphael Project is a specific program geared at the members of the parish to inviting and praying for their friends, co-workers, family members, and neighbors to come.

PARISH PRAYER LIST:

Pray for the Catechumenate: Carol Lockett, Yvonne Hyma, Katrina Barnard, William Barnard, Gregory Parsons, Kevin Shaw, David Jenks, Mary Anne Harding, the Easley family [Gregg, Gayla, Evan, Kate, and Grace], Rigel Thurson, and Gregory Goecker.

Pray for the Health of Body and Soul of those who have requested your prayers Nun SERAPHIMA, MARY Laverne Hollapeter family, Landon Lockett, Hannah NICJOLE Montgomery, Nadia Onjanow, Teresa Anna Sisko, PATRICIA Wilson, and those who serve in the Armed Forces

Birthdays, Names Days, and Anniversaries:

Happy Name Day:

St. Eudocia Mar 1---Vicki EUDOCIA Knight

St Patrick, March 17—Reader PATRICK Howard, PATRICK Kelly , PATRICIA Wilson,

Arch Angel Gabriel, March 26---GABRIEL Montgomery

Happy Slava!

Arch Angel Gabriel, March 26---The Vicki Jones Family

Happy Birthday:

Aurora TATIANA Yauk March 9

Subdeacon Jon MARK Nials - March 7

AIDAN Isaac Nials -March 18

CHRISTIAN Nelson - March 26

Welcoming New Members

We would like to welcome new members Despina Lambros and her children, Daniel, Anastasia, Alexander, and Vasiliki to the St. John's Family. May God grant them many years.

On Sunday January 28, 2007 Gregory Goecker was made a Catechumen of the Holy Orthodox Church. Remember to include him in your prayers as he prepares for Holy Chrismation.

God Grant You Many Years!

Is your special date missing here? Please let Subdeacon Thomas know. Our data base crashed and we do not have family information anymore and are working off past issues of the Newsletter only. Help us to celebrate and pray for you on your special days.



March is Antiochian Women's Month

This month we are especially thankful for the Antiochian Women who serve this parish in so many ways. The following is the prayer of our Archdiocese's **Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America:**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

O Christ our God, we are all pledged to serve Thee with our whole being. Help us to continue to work for Thee through our Church without seeking praise, without seeking personal gain, without judging others, without a feeling that we have worked hard enough and now must allow ourselves rest. Give us strength to do what is right and help us to go on striving and to remember that activities are not the main thing in life. The most important thing is to have our hearts directed and attuned to Thee. Amen.

St. Photini Antiochian Women of St. John

The Women of St. John meet the 3rd Sunday of each month. Their ministry includes raising money for worthy causes within St. John, beautification of the church, assistance for women in need, and many other activities.

- Caryn Macdonald (President)
- Becky Thurner (Vice President)
- Mary King (Secretary)

THE ORTHODOX KID'S PAGE

Jesus Heals the Man Who Came Through the Roof
The Second Sunday of the Great Fast - Mark 2:1-12



Many people wanted to hear Jesus preaching. There was no more room at the home where he was. Some people came with a man who was lying on a stretcher. He was a paralytic and needed Jesus to heal him, and that is why his friends brought him there. They couldn't get him through the doorway because of the crowds, so they went on the roof. They took pieces of the roof off, and then lowered him down in front of Jesus. They so wanted him healed, and they believed Jesus would do just that.

Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

So that you may know the Son of man can forgive sins, I say to the paralytic, 'Rise, take up your stretcher, and go home.' The man rose, and did just that. Everyone was amazed and said, "We never saw anything like this!"

1. Before you answer some questions, imagine what it must have been like. Imagine a home made of mud brick, with a roof made from sticks and mud. Now imagine Jesus teaching the people crowded inside . . .
2. Why couldn't the paralytic, and his friends, come in through the door?
3. Where did they go because they couldn't walk in?
4. What did Jesus say when He saw the man?
5. Did Jesus heal the man?
6. After this, would you believe that Jesus could forgive sin?