

March 2015



SAINT INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

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March 2015 Newsletter

Greetings in the Lord,

In the Gospel of Matthew our Lord, after making it clear that we cannot serve two masters, tells us “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Our heart’s desire is where we put the energy of our lives. Even if we are unaware of our deepest desires the energy of our life reveals where our hearts set their hopes.

In the study of physics there is a law called “the law of the conservation of energy.” The law states that:

The total amount of energy in a system remains constant (“is conserved”), although energy within the system can be changed from one form to another or transferred from one object to another. Energy cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be transformed.

This law of physics can also be understood spiritually. When we take energy away or put pressure on one area of our lives this energy has to go somewhere, it has to be transformed or redirected towards something else.

As we enter the season of the Great Fast we are challenged to “commend ourselves and each other and all of our lives unto Christ our God” with a concerted effort. The Lenten fast, if followed, starves the self-centered areas of our life which



comfort us. However, we are not simply called to starve, we are called to redirect our energy and our hearts towards the Kingdom of Heaven. The practices of fasting, prayer and almsgiving help us make a transition from the kingdom of this world to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Unfortunately, there is a common temptation to make Great Lent a check list of minimums that we must do in order to be in good graces with God. In this approach instead of redirecting our energy towards something spiritually constructive, we simply starve certain areas of our lives while indulging others. Like a squeeze toy we put the pressure on one side and simply bulge out on the other.

Tito Colliander in his famous book the *Way of the Ascetics*, illustrates this “squeeze toy” effect, he states:

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Take care not to bar the front entrance to evil and at the same time leave the back door ajar, through which it can cleverly slip in in another form. How do you benefit if, for example, you...give up on smoking but give free rein to your urge to prattle (*foolish, endless talk*)? Or if you deny your urge to prattle, but read exciting novels? Or if you stop reading novels but let loose your imagination and quiver in sweet melancholy? All these are different forms of the same thing: your insatiable craving to satisfy your own need for enjoyment.

Tito is writing in 1904, before TV, internet, and our ubiquitous hand-held devices. We live in a time where there are legions of things to satisfy our “insatiably craving for enjoyment,” which means we have to be much more vigilant to “not leave the back door ajar.”

Those of us who put effort in keeping the fast will find that we have a hierarchy of comforts we look to that take the place of our chief luxury. Reflect on your own spiritual life. What are the things that you turn to for comfort and enjoyment? What are your top 10? Some common things that make most people’s list are TV, alcohol, relationships (which in our day includes internet and social networking), the endless news cycle (another form of entertainment), politics and sports (did I mention entertainment), and let us not forget retail therapy, the all-holy sacrament of our society, shopping and spending money, often for things we do not need. Or... perhaps being busy? Watch yourself this Lent and you will see the myriads of ways we avoid engaging the spiritual life.

If we want a fruitful fast we must put the energy of our hearts toward the Kingdom of Heaven. In the first week of Lent one of the verses sung in church gives some practical suggestions:

While fasting in body, O people, let us also fast in spirit! Let us loose the bonds of iniquity! Let us undo the chains of injustice! Let us break the yoke of oppression! Let us give food to the hungry! Let us shelter the poor and homeless, so that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God!

The above verse is telling us to redirect our vigor towards helping other human beings, many of whom are barely surviving.

If we do not have opportunity to help those less fortunate than at least we should take the time to feed our own starving souls by reading the Scriptures or a spiritual book. We can at least loose the bonds of our own iniquity by partaking in the Mystery of Repentance. We can try to put more energy into prayer so that our fallen nakedness can be clothed with the glory of Christ.

As we journey through the Great Fast it is my prayer that God will bless us to make the Kingdom of Heaven the chief desire of our hearts.

May God bless you,

Fr. Theophan



Announcements

- On Sunday of Orthodoxy (March 1st) please bring an icon of your patron saint or family saint for the procession after the Divine Liturgy. Also, please bring any icons that you would like blessed.
- Holy Cross is having a Lenten retreat on Saturday, March 7th. See announcement below. Please let Fr. Theophan know if you plan on attending.
- Fr. Theophan will be giving a parish update on Sunday March 8th. If you have an questions about the parish or diocese please be there and ask.
- This year’s Lenten Class series will be offered at 1pm in the Church. Fr. Theophan and Dr. Gary Cox will be teaching a four part series. March 1st -Confession, 8th Fasting, 15th Almsgiving and 22nd Prayer. All are welcome and encouraged to come.
- On Saturday, March 14th we will serve Vigil at 6pm for the feast of the Precious Cross.

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- The Book Club meets Tuesday March 17th. See below for more info.
- The Parish Council is scheduled to meet on March 19th at 6pm.
- The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is in an unusual place this year and will be served on Monday, March 23rd at 6:30pm.
- The Great Feast of Annunciation will be celebrated with Vigil on Tuesday, March 24th at 6:30pm and the Vespers Divine Liturgy on Wednesday the 25th at 9am.

Adult Sunday School

Adult Sunday School, for those of you who may not know, is an opportunity to study the Bible. The Adult Sunday School will meet on Sunday's at 9:00am in the Parish Hall outside Father's office. Steven Davis will lead a discussion/study of the Epistle for the day. Linda Tutcher will review the lives of the saints of the day and week. All are welcome to come and study the Scriptures and learn about the lives of the Saints.

Church Cleanup

We might think that cleaning the church is something lowly or not really important. Not so! Our Lord himself set the example by washing his disciples' feet, and the feet of fishermen from the year 30 AD must have been quite a challenge from any number of vantage points! We need people to join the Church Cleaning team – and don't think that by saying "someone else is bound to help, I don't need to" that this will solve the problem! The duties are not difficult, and in fact in monasteries it is considered one of the most coveted of obediences, to help beautify the Lord's house, where he gives us his body and blood. If you feel called to be one of the few, the proud, the chosen for this holy work, please see Eric Olson, and he will promptly enroll you – and our good God will bless you!

Book Club

On Tuesday March 17th at 6:30pm we will meet at Eric and Lee Olson's house for the book club. The book we will be discussing is *Great Lent*, by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. Copies are available in our

bookstore for \$15. Light refreshments will be provided by the host. All are welcome.

Many Years!

<i>Birthdays</i>	March 1	Molly Croft
	2	Paul Guest
	5	Mark Dorogy
	19	Thomas Kehayes
	22	Eliza Buck

Anniversaries

19 Gary and Dora Cox

A quote for contemplation:

By fasting, a man lifts his soul above its earthly prison and penetrates through the darkness of animal life to the light of God's Kingdom, to his own true homeland.

Fasting makes a man strong, decisive and courageous before both men and demons.

Fasting also makes a man generous, meek, merciful and obedient

By fasting, Moses was made worthy to receive the Commandment's from God's hands.

By fasting, Elijah closed the heavens, so that there was no rain for three years: by fasting, he called down fire from heaven on the idol-worshippers, and by fasting made himself so pure that he was able, on Horeb, to talk with God

By fasting, Daniel was saved from the lion's den, and the Three Children from the burning fiery furnace.

By fasting, King David lifted up his heart to the Lord, and God's grace descended on him and he sang the sweetest and most surpassing of prayers that any man, before the coming of Christ, has ever raised to God.

By fasting, King Jehoshaphat crushed his enemies, the Ammonites and the Moabites.

By fasting, the Jews were saved from persecution by Haman, the imperial deputy.

By fasting, the city of Nineveh was saved from the destruction that the prophet Johan had prophesied for it.

By fasting, John the Baptist became the greatest of those born of woman.

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Armed with fasting, Saint Anthony overcame all the hordes of demons and drove them from him. What? Only Saint Anthony? An uncountable army of Christian saints, both men and women, have purified themselves by fasting, strengthened themselves by fasting and become the greatest heroes in human history. For they conquered that which it is most difficult to overcome – themselves. And, in conquering themselves, they conquered the world and Satan. St. Nikolai of Zicha



Confession

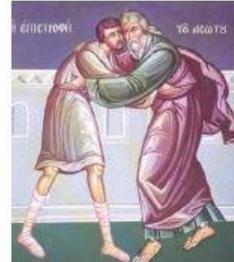
The sacrament of Holy Confession is an important and vital part of the Christian life. Confession is about healing. The Lord urges us to flee sin and gives us His commandments not to burden us with “rules”, but to free us from that which truly burdens us; sin. Our Lord loves us and knows that sin causes things to break in our lives and causes us needless suffering. We break relationships with others when we sin against them, we separate ourselves from God when we sin and do not repent. Sin leads to a constant burden of guilt and a troubled conscience. Sin builds upon itself, and can lead us into isolation and despair. The enemy always seeks to break those good things in our lives, Our Lord always seeks to heal and restore. In Holy Confession we have the opportunity to honestly and fully tell God our troubles, to cast our burdens on Him, and to bring our spiritual wounds and illnesses to the Great Physician, Who is willing and able to heal us. In Confession we stand in front of the icon of Christ, signifying His invisible, but very real presence among us. The

priest stands as witness, on behalf of the Church, fulfilling a role to which he is ordained. Confession and absolution are not magic, and are only effectual when approached in faith, honesty, and a real desire to be healed.

At St. Innocent Confessions are heard on Saturday’s an hour before Vespers or Vigil, on Sunday mornings before the Liturgy (9:15-9:50am), after the Liturgy if need be, and by appointment during the week. Participation in the Sacrament of Confession is expected for those who desire to be anointed with Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday. Receiving the Eucharist on Pascha assumes that one has confessed their sins recently, that is, during Lent. Please take the time to schedule your confession this Lenten season.

Lenten Retreat at Holy Cross All are welcome

**REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION:
MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL
LENTEN RETREAT**



**PROTOPRESBYTER ANTHONY SALZMAN
PRESBYTERA CHRISTINE SALZMAN
RETREAT LEADERS**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7TH, 2015
HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
859 FIRST STREET, MACON, GA 31201**

10:00 AM	OPENING PRAYER
10:15 AM	FIRST PRESENTATION
11:00 AM	DISCUSSION
12:00 PM	LENTEN LUNCHEON
1:00 PM	SECOND PRESENTATION
2:00 PM	DISCUSSION
2:45 PM	CANON OF REPENTANCE
3:00 PM	PRIVATE CONFESSIONS

The Great Feast of Annunciation March 25th

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century.

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): "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel." The Fathers of the Church understand "her seed" to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to St Joseph: "Hail, thou who art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel's message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but

could not understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature. Then said Mary unto the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34).

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1: 35-38)."



The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message. The Virgin is depicted either standing or sitting, usually holding yarn in her left hand. Sometimes she is shown holding a scroll. Her right hand may be raised to indicate her surprise at the message she is hearing. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon, which symbolizes heaven. In a famous icon from Sinai, a white dove is shown in the ray of light.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 Sunday of Orthodoxy 9am Adult Sunday School 10am Divine Liturgy w/ Icon Procession 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Lenten Series</p>	2	<p>3 7pm Bolingbroke Community Club meeting</p>	<p>4 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>5 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	6	<p>7 Wine and Oil 10am -3pm Lenten Retreat Holy Cross 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers</p>
<p>8 St. Gregory Palamas 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Lenten Series - Fasting</p>	9	10	<p>11 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>12 8am MCMA meeting 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	13	<p>14 Wine and Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil for the Feast of the Cross</p>
<p>15 Precious Cross 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Lenten Series- Almsgiving</p>	16	<p>17 6:30pm Book Club</p>	<p>18 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy</p>	<p>19 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council</p>	20	<p>21 Wine and Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers</p>
<p>22 St. John Climacus 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School 1pm Lenten Series - Prayer</p>	<p>23 Wine and Oil 6:30pm Compline with the Great Canon of St. Andrew</p>	<p>24 Wine and Oil <i>6:30pm Vigil for the Annunciation of the Most-Holy Theotokos</i></p>	<p>25 Fish, Wine and Oil 9am Vespersal Divine Liturgy for Annunciation of the Most-Holy Theotokos <i>No Presanctified</i></p>	<p>26 Wine and Oil 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry</p>	27	<p>28 Wine and Oil 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers</p>

April 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 St. Mary of Egypt 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape	30 Andrew Gould visit for Parish Hall Committee	31 Wine and Oil Repose of St. Innocent – parish feast day 6:30 Presanctified Liturgy	1 No Presanctified Liturgy	2 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry	3 6:30pm Matins for Lazarus Saturday	4 9am Baptisms 10am Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday 5pm Confession 6pm Vigil for Palm
5 Palm Sunday 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School	6 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	7 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins	8 6:30pm The Holy Mystery of Unction	9 Wine and Oil 10am Vesperal Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6:30pm Matins with the 12 Passion Gospels	10 Strict Fast 10am Royal Hours 3pm Vespers w/ the placing of the Shroud. 4:30 decor the tomb 6:30pm Matins w/ the Lamentations	11 Wine 10am Vesperal Divine Liturgy 11:30pm Midnight Office, Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
12 Great and Holy Pascha! 1pm Agape Vespers <i>followed by the Pascha Party!</i>	13	14	15 No Fast 6pm Paschal Vespers	16 9am Paschal Divine Liturgy 1-4pm Central State Prison Ministry 6pm Parish Council	17 No Fast	18 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
19 St. Thomas Sunday 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 12:00pm Radonitsa Panikhida	20 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	21 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	22 Wine and Oil <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i> 6pm Readers Vespers	23 <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	24 Wine and Oil <i>Fr. Theophan out of town</i>	25 5pm Confession 6pm Great Vespers
26 9am Adult Sunday School 9:40 Hours 10am Divine Liturgy 11:45 Agape 12:30 Church School	27	28	29 6pm Vespers	30		