



Newsletter for St. Joseph Orthodox Church

Lent 2009

Pastor's Corner

The Very Rev. Fr. Matthew MacKay



Well it is Lent, and once again we have entered into a time of asceticism: prayer, fasting, confession and giving of alms. We are being called by the Church to change our life style, to quiet down and change our focus for 40 days. But, this is not to be a time of forced formal obligations, but instead, this is a time to soften our hearts. We need to soften our hearts so that we will be open to the hidden spiritual realities that are around us. God does not want us to be overwhelmed by the fallen sinful world around us and its call to fulfill our every passion or desire. Instead, God wants us all to resist these temptations so that we can better understand and experience His loving presence in our lives now. To help us move from the fallen sinful world into the spiritual world, the church liturgically changes its services. Our services are longer, the church's color is darker, there are more physical movements, and we are given more opportunities for communion. All of this is to help transport us from the mundane fallen sinful world into the spiritual world. Lent for us becomes an intentional time of self reflection. It is a time for us to reorient ourselves towards God. We are to let go or give up our selfish worldly ways. We are to leave the world behind and enter into the mystery of Lent. When we do this it will soften our hearts and transform us. This ascetical work will better able God to reach out to us. Lenten asceticism is the way we do our part to prepare for God's personal revelation and presence in our lives. When we push sin, the world, and ourselves out of our hearts, God can enter into our lives. So, let us take up this holy work of asceticism and make room for God now and at Pascha to come.

From Bishop Basil:

A QUESTION has been raised concerning when a fast begins and ends. First, please be aware that there are two distinct types of fasts: an Ascetical Fast and a Eucharistic Fast. An **ASCETICAL FAST** (meaning a day or season when we abstain from certain foods, drinks and activities) begins at the midnight preceding the fast day (or the first day of the fasting season) and ends at the following midnight (or that of the final day of the fasting season). For example, the usual Wednesday fast begins at midnight on Tuesday and ends at midnight on Wednesday; likewise, the usual Friday fast begins at midnight on Thursday and ends at midnight on Friday. The Apostles Fast, a fasting season of variable duration, begins at midnight on All Saints Sunday and ends at midnight on June 28th; likewise, the Dormition Fast begins at midnight on July 31st and ends at midnight on August 14th, and the Nativity Fast begins at midnight on November 14th and ends at midnight on December 24th. The Great Fast (which includes both the Forty Days and Holy Week) begins at midnight on Forgiveness Sunday (not immediately following Forgiveness Vespers) and ends at midnight on Great and Holy Saturday. A **EUCCHARISTIC FAST** (meaning the period we abstain from all food and drink and certain activities in preparation for receiving Holy Communion) begins the preceding midnight for both a morning and an evening reception (or, for those of a weak constitution preparing for an evening reception, following a light breakfast or even a light lunch on the day of reception, whichever is blessed by one's father confessor) and it ends with the reception of the Holy Eucharist.



From the Chair

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As I was trying to decide what to write about for my article in the Epistle newsletter and realized that Great Lent is upon on us, I wanted to write about “True Peace.” I am not talking about peace on earth, which is much needed in this world, but the only true peace which is from the Lord. It is the peace He lays upon our hearts, the peace that exists amid the tragedy and chaos we live in. It is the peace that Christ has promised us. It is a beautiful promise of peace, which Christ says is unlike the peace the world gives.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Christ is often called the Prince of Peace. His peace is not a passive condition —He blesses the *makers* of peace. The peacemaker is a person who helps heal damaged relationships. Throughout the Gospel, we see Christ bestowing peace. In His final discourse before His arrest, He says to the Apostles: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). After the Resurrection, He greets His followers with the words, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). He instructs His followers that, on entering a house, their first action should be the blessing, “Peace to this house” (Luke 10:5).

I wish to believe each day that man could finally figure it out and create a world where peace was the natural state of human existence, where goodness prevailed, and the driving force in the hearts of all people, was love for God and one another. But no matter how many monuments we build, no matter how many committees we form, and no matter how many United Nation councils we convene, peace is not going to happen. But, because each of us at St. Joseph’s have our hope and focus in Christ, we can have an inner peace that surpasses all understanding during our Lenten journey toward Pascha.

*Faithfully yours in Christ,
Helen (Eleni) Norton, Chairman
Saint Joseph Parish Council*



DOT Update

Holy Bread Committee Isabel Stone

There is a long tradition of the Holy Bread used for communion being provided by the parishioners. This is an added opportunity for prayer and blessing, and for being a part of the community of worshipers in a very special way. Some people have not the facility or skill or time to bake at home, but would like to make their bread offering, and ask for the prayers for their loved ones, too.

At a recent meeting of the Daughters of the Theotokos, there was a proposal that a committee for baking the Holy Bread be formed. The purpose of this committee is to provide Holy Bread as a service for those people who cannot make the bread themselves. A reasonable fee/donation to the committee will be used to further the work of St Joseph church.

There is a sign up sheet in the Parish Hall near the kitchen for when the bread is needed, and if you want to participate, through the Holy Bread committee, put an asterisk by your name, and be sure to phone Mayada or Ghada. (If there are instructions at the bottom of the sign up sheet, please follow them so things will go smoothly.)

If this is something you find helpful, we are so glad to have this chance to work together. We all (Daughters) love to build community and do service to our home church, St Joseph the Betrothed.

Please remember to bring donations of non-perishable food to St. Joseph this season to be shared with a local food bank.

**In Some Places
“Futures” Have
Nothing To Do With
The Stock Market.**

In many parts of the world, innocent children have no alternative to living in harmful environments. In Romania, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) has joined with the Romanian Orthodox Church to make a difference in young lives. A newly established youth center provides educational, recreational and cultural activities in a safe environment. Through IOCC's youth programs in Romania and other countries, you can help ensure a brighter future for the children of our world.



IOCC

PO Box 680225 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0225 • USA
Donation Hotline - toll free (877) 803-8000 • www.iocc.org

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES



On Speech

Fr. James Early

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, **slow to speak, slow to wrath**" (James 1:19, emphasis added [of course, there is no emphasis in Scriptural passages!])*

Calvin Coolidge is not known for being one of our greatest presidents, but he *is* famous for being a man of very few words. One time, when Coolidge was attending a formal dinner, one of the guests told him, "I made a bet that I could make you say at least three words to me." Coolidge's response? "You lose."

When I was in grade school, I did not have much in common with President Coolidge. I remember constantly receiving "C's" in conduct (and in handwriting too, but that's another story!). For those of you who are not in the U. S., a "C" is a mediocre grade. And why did I get "C's" in conduct? Because I talked too much!

As I have grown older, I have found that I like talking less and less. I have become by nature a man of few words. Sure, I can talk (and talk a LOT) when I have to, but my preference is to hold my peace. The second conflict that St. Anthony mentions in the eleventh saying in his section of *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* is that of speech. All of us battle with the use of our tongue in one way or another. Some of us, like me in my childhood days, struggle with using it too much. Others who are not talkative by nature still struggle with controlling what *they* say. A few of us struggle with both.

The Scriptures abound in warnings about how and how much we use our tongues. My favorite passages about speech are found in the book of Proverbs. I thought I would share some of them with you. I'm quoting from the New King James Version, because I haven't yet gotten used to the different numbering system in the new OSB.

First of all, several of the Proverbs teach us of the general importance of guarding our tongue:
He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction (13:3)
Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles. (21:23)

Others speak of the trouble that misuse of the gift of speech can cause:
A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul (18:7; see also chapter 3 of the epistle of St. James)

Still others tell us of the importance of being, in St. James' words, "slow to speak:"
Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him (29:20)

Are you the type of person who finishes other peoples' sentences? I must confess that I am often guilty of this. Or do you spout off your opinion before you really know enough about a matter? Here's what Solomon has to say about these practices:

He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him (18:13)

Remember Cliff Claybin (sp?) from the TV show *Cheers*? He delighted in showing everyone how much he knew about any subject, whether he really knew anything about it or not. Like Cliff, some people always have to put in their two cents. Regarding this, the Proverbs tell us:

A prudent man conceals knowledge, But the heart of fools proclaims foolishness (12:23)

A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart (19:3)

Many of the Proverbs show us that there is wisdom in simply reducing the *quantity* of our words:

He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace. (11:12)

Cont. on Back Page



On Speech, cont.

Fr. James Early

He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. (17: 27)

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise (10:19; this is one of my favorites -- the more we talk, the more likely we are to sin with our tongue)

Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. (17:28; this is another one of my favorites -- if we will just shut our traps, people will think we are wise. And we might even become wise over time!)

Finally, not only must we fight against speaking too much, but we must guard *what* we say. Many of us have a tendency to use our tongues like a sword. We use sarcasm and ridicule to put others down. As St. James writes, "No man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so." (James 3:8-10).

Solomon concurs:

There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health (12:18).

St. Paul's words to the Ephesians are also helpful: *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. (4:29).*

Here in the South, we have a saying: "God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason!" So, brothers and sisters, let us go on a "diet of words" (a permanent one!) and let us use our words to build others up, rather than tear them down. As the old song says, "If you can't say something nice, say nothing!"

I'll try to be the first person to take my advice!



Come with Me

Your room is dark;
It isn't ugly, it is
Only obscure,
Difficult to see.

Shadows flicker and fade.
It is hard to see the things,
The beautiful things,
Inside your soul,
Inside your room.

Come with Me,
Step inside My Light.
Smile and see
Shadows vanish.

Come with Me.
Bathe in My warm daylight.
Watch, with what ease
Light gently washes away Night

And when you leave,
If you leave,
Take Me with you.
Your room,
Your very dark room,
Will be filled with Light.

And you will see the things,
The beautiful things,
Inside your soul,
Inside your room.

Hilary Chala

Prayer Request

If you have a prayer request for someone please contact Fr. Matthew or Irene Fedikovich and give either one of them the name(s) of those to be added to the list. Also, specify the type of prayer requested. Alternatively, you may fill out a Prayer Request Form located in the narthex.