



ST. NICHOLAS NEWS

February 2017

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

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Diocese of the West
Orthodox Church
in America

Fr. Stephan Meholick,
Pastor

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IMPORTANT DATES

Feb. 1-2
Meeting of the Lord

Feb. 5
Annual Meeting

Feb. 26
Forgiveness Sunday

Bliny Luncheon
Forgiveness Vespers 6pm

Feb. 27-March 2
Pure Week

A week of community
retreat, prayer,
fasting & worship

PURE WEEK

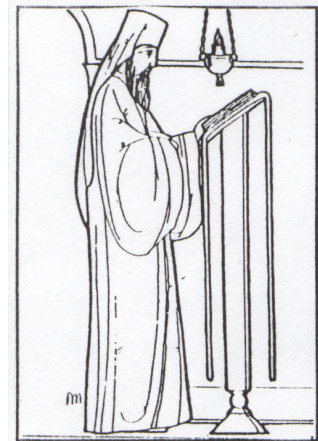
February 27-March 2

The first week of Great Lent is a very special time of renewal and re-dedication of our lives to God. It is the most perfect and natural time for a retreat – as individuals and as a community. It is not meant to be a “holy burden” imposed on our already-too-busy schedules. On the contrary, it can be a real gift from God. Reaping the fruits of this gift, however, will require considerable effort on our part. This effort is the seizing of a wonderful spiritual opportunity which goes far beyond merely fulfilling a “religious obligation.” If you have the slightest doubt about this, please ask a friend who has but once tasted the fruits of this blessed week.

What can I do during this special week?

If at all possible, attend matins at daybreak – at the very least on the first day.

At this service you can especially experience the “bright sadness” which we hear and read about in so many lenten sermons and writings. If you are at home during the daytime, there will be services also scheduled at mid-day. In the evenings, make an effort at **least** once or twice to attend Great Compline with the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, which sets the whole tone of our lenten effort. Finally, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts with the reception of Holy Communion and the blessing of kutia (boiled wheat) is the climax of the weekday services.



Remember, services this week are held many times during the morning, daytime and evening. Not everyone can attend **all** of them, but most of us can attend **some** of them.

N.B. The “lenten tone” of worship is used only at the weekday services.

If we come **only** on Saturday or Sunday or even the final days of Holy Week, we will miss that entire experience.

February: Gateway to Spring

"The lenten spring has come, the flower of repentance has begun to open..." (Vespers - Feb. 21)

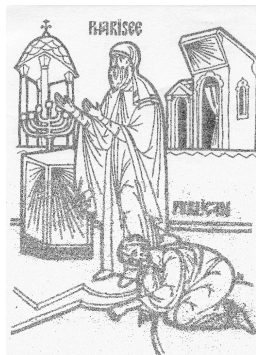
As we prepare to celebrate the feast of the Meeting of the Lord (the 40th day of the "Winter Pascha") we also immediately begin our preparation for the Great and Holy season of Lent which begins at vespers on Feb. 26th. Each week has its own special theme which corresponds to the Gospel read on Sunday. This message on each Lord's Day emphasizes a particular aspect of the Good News. Each week we are also challenged to examine how we have responded to that "News."

Feb. 5 – Publican and the Pharisee

(Gospel reading:
Luke 18:10-14)

Theme: **Humility**

Religion cannot be reduced to external observances and must not be the source of self-admiration. "Open to Me the Doors of Repentance" is sung at Vigil.



CHALLENGE

What kind of world (church, parish) would this be if everyone were just like me? How would the quantity or quality of my worship and prayers and Christian stewardship (time, talents, resources) differ if my actions were seen by no one except God?

Feb. 12– Prodigal Son

(Gospel reading: Luke 15:11-32)

Theme #1: **Return to God**

It is not enough to acknowledge sins and confess them. We must make a decision to *change* our lives – to begin a process of ascension and purification.

Theme #2: **Exile**

At Vigil on Saturday night, Psalm 137 (*By the Waters of Babylon*) is sung. I remember that I have lost communion with God. I am a long way from my true home. Something priceless, pure, beautiful and eternal is missing from my life.

CHALLENGE

Where am I going in life? Do I **really** experience the Church as an icon of my true home? What is God calling me to change in my life?

Feb. 19 – Meatfare

(Gospel reading: Matthew 25: 31-46)

Theme: **Preparation for Divine Judgment**

All of us will someday face God as our judge. Thus we must refer our actions, attitudes and judgments to Jesus Christ, to His presence in the world, and especially we must see Him in our brothers and sisters. "...in as much as you have done it unto the least of my brethren, you have done it to me."

CHALLENGE

Am I my brother's keeper? Am I properly disposing of the gift of life? What does God really expect of me?

Feb. 26 – Cheesefare / Forgiveness Sunday

(Gospel reading: Matthew 6:14-21)

Theme: **Expulsion from Paradise**

We were created for knowledge of God and communion with Him. Sin has deprived us of this blessed life (paradise) and existence in this fallen world is to be in exile. Christ opens the doors of paradise to those who follow Him, and the Church is our guide to the heavenly Fatherland.

CHALLENGE

Where did we all come from? What does it mean to be happy? What is truth? (John 18:18-35)



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Sunday, February 5th

To allow time for discussion of future projects, all the reports of the ministry group leaders will be available electronically on our parish website the week before our meeting. If you don't have access to the website and/or a printer, ask a friend to make you a hard copy.