

The Good News

Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Sacramento

On the Sacrifice of Christ

St. Alexey Mechev

... Brethren! Let us weep and mourn, for it was we who by our sins put the Sinless One in the bonds of death; it was we, condemned to death, who forced Him to descend to the gates of death. For us, whom hell is ready to swallow, He descended with His soul into hell, lying with His Body before us.

O inexhaustible and inexpressible Divine Love! Our sweetest Jesus! To such measure hast Thou loved man—the most contemptible and ungrateful creature! Thou Thyself didst become a Man for us in order to bring us into communion with God; Thou Thyself didst suffer in order to save us from eternal suffering; Thou Thyself didst die that we might live forever; Thou Thyself didst descend into hell so we would never be in hell. Man lost everything through sin, and Thou dost return everything to him—and how dost Thou return it?

Man lost blessedness through pride, disobedience and the desire to be equal to God; but Thou dost return it through obedience to the Heavenly Father, through the deepest self-abasement and humility, through the most shameful and painful death, and finally, through descent into the abyss of hell. Thou didst return to man what he had lost, and now he has become truly happy and blessed; now he is again with God, lives for God, strives for God, seeks consolation in God, and hopes to live and rejoice with God for ever and ever.
(cont'd on p.2)



Sunday of Orthodoxy

On Sunday March 9th we welcomed clergy and faithful from several local Orthodox parishes to commemorate the Triumph of Orthodoxy. On this day we celebrate not only the historic restoration of holy icons to the churches in the year 843 after the dark period of iconoclasm, but we also celebrate the vibrancy, enduring character and eternal relevance of our Orthodox Christian Faith, as Fr. Timothy noted in his remarks. This is the same faith, as Scripture says, *once delivered to the saints* – treasured by, suffered for, and handed down to us by our forefathers and mothers in Christ throughout the centuries." Fr. Philip McClanahan and Fr. Stephen Howell of St. Athanasius Antiochian Orthodox Church, and Fr. Matvey Ismailov of Holy Myrrhbearing Women in West Sacramento joined in concelebrating the service together with Holy Cross clergy. Abbess Melania and the sisters of Holy Assumption Monastery honored us with their presence as well. (cont'd on p.2)

On the Sacrifice of Christ cont'd

...Who can describe or fully appreciate the great abyss, the whole ocean of God's mercy, which our Dearest, Most Precious, Savior—now silently lying in the tomb—has poured out upon us from His Father?

Brethren! Let us feel this mercy of our Savior, and in the gratitude of our hearts let us bow down with our bodies and souls before this tomb, kissing His wounds endured for us, His hands and feet pierced for us—kissing not only with our lips, but especially with warm and loving hearts. And let us remember all our lives His mercy and give thanks and praise to Him until the end of our days. Oh, if only our entire lives were nothing but a fragrant censer before Him! Let us pray about this in front of Him Who lies in this tomb, and the sinners' tearful prayer will be heard by Him Who died for sinners. Amen. *(from a homily delivered on Great and Holy Friday)*

Building Program Updates - Progress & Bumps in the Road



At the end of last year, we hit the huge milestone of raising \$1 million toward our new church! This year, we've had a number of successful fundraisers so far, such as our Blini Luncheon and Icon & Book Sale on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and will have a rummage sale on Sat. May 3rd. We have a **Lenten Goal of raising \$35,000**, of which we've raised \$24,000 toward at the time of drafting this newsletter.

Sunday of Orthodoxy cont'd

...Fr. Timothy also spoke about the importance of maintaining this tradition to manifest and live out locally our unity and love for one another that our Lord calls us to. He also noted the great work being done when our parishes work together in charitable ministries like our Food Closet and in educational ministries like OCF, Youth Groups, Young Adult Fellowships and Homeschool Co-ops. He also challenged the faithful present to dream, be inspired, pray about what is possible when we work together with a shared purpose and faith. Fr. Matvey also invited all present to the consecration of their newly restored Church and 100th Anniversary Celebration May 4th.

We've hit a bump in the road, so to speak, with regard to getting our permitting approved and beginning work. After clearing all the technical reviews last year, Sac. County planning staff have put our project on hold for several months while an Environmental Impact Assessment is being prepared. County staff indicated that staffing shortages have slowed down project reviews. Our Holy Cross team is actively engaging with them to see if anything can be done to expedite the review process. We remain confident that all will be accomplished in God's time, and we continue to fundraise anticipating the day we'll get the green light to get the dirt moving!

A Saint for Our Times

Lenten Retreat with Fr. Philip Halliwell

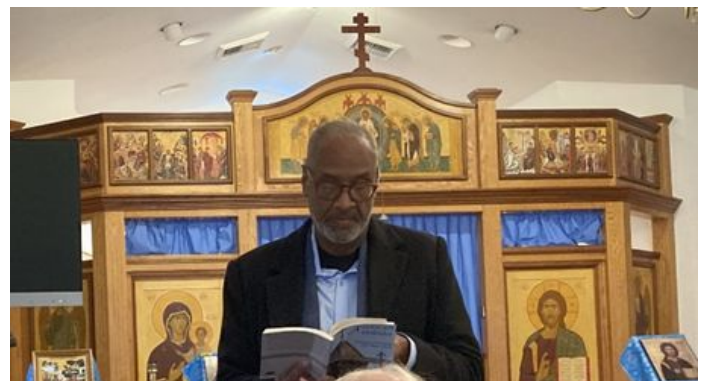


On Saturday March 22nd, Fr. Philip Halliwell of Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in San Francisco gave an inspiring and edifying talk titled: "St. Sophrony the Athonite: A Saint of our Times." St. Sophrony was canonized just five years ago. The talk was well-attended and had a personal touch, as Fr. Philip recounted some of his remembrances of St. Sophrony during his time living in Essex. He emphasized the saint's teaching on the centrality of the Divine Liturgy, the Gospel, and the Jesus Prayer in our spiritual lives. He likewise shared some of the prayers composed by the saint and his advice for us on prayer. A lively Q&A session and fellowship followed. Everyone in attendance was grateful to Fr. Philip for his words and for helping to acquaint us more deeply with such a significant contemporary saint.



American Orthodox Presentation

Author and filmmaker Robert John Hammond gave a stirring presentation at Elevation of the Holy Cross about his upcoming documentary film *American Orthodox* and his companion book, *American Orthodox: Finding the Ancient Faith in the Modern World*. John read from the book's introduction, shared the official film trailer, and engaged the audience in a heartfelt Q&A about the stories behind the project. Former California State Parks historian, Robin Innokentia Wellman, who is featured in the film, also spoke passionately about the saints of Fort Ross and the sacred legacy of that land, announcing the upcoming 100th anniversary pilgrimage and centennial celebration of continuous Orthodox liturgies at Fort Ross, scheduled for October 4. The presentation highlighted the power of storytelling to unite Orthodox Christians across jurisdictions and generations through the lives of American saints and sacred places.



Our next mini-retreat will take place **Sunday May 25th** after the Divine Liturgy, when we look forward to welcoming Anastasia Barksdale, a former OCMC Missionary to Albania for fifteen years, who will speak on **"The Missionary Vision of Archbishop Anastasios,"** the saintly missionary who revived the Albanian Orthodox Church and reposed in the Lord earlier this year at the age of 95.

Youth Updates

Church School is going well with our youngest class learning Old Testament stories and preparing for Pascha. The Middle Class is studying the Divine Liturgy, and the Teen Class is studying Church History. Fr. Timothy and Fr. Ian also both guest taught a class during Lent and had some engaging discussions with our young folks.

The **St. Nektarios Homeschool Co-Op** continues to meet regularly at Holy Cross, with families from four local parishes participating. Recent activities included learning about iconography and icon-writing. The **Teen Group** has been on a little break during Lent but will begin meeting again twice monthly on Sunday evenings after Pascha.

Get Ready! The **St. Eugene's Camp** is happening this June 22-28th! St. Eugene's is an Orthodox Summer Camp for ages 7-17 that allows youth to grow in Christ and experience the Church beyond their parish, enjoy many fun activities, and form lifelong friendships. Campers also experience an Orthodox rhythm of life with morning & evening prayers together and an engaging faith-formation program. Scholarship assistance is available if needed. Counselor volunteers are also needed.

In addition to the **UC Davis Orthodox Christian Fellowship**, the **Sac State OCF** chapter has also recently reactivated! OCF's mission is to both minister to Orthodox college students and provide a place for interested inquirers to learn about the faith. Meeting at CSUS are currently taking place Wednesday afternoons twice a month.



Holy Week & Bright Week Schedule

- Sat. 4/12** Lazarus Saturday, 9AM
Vigil of Palm Sunday, 5:30 PM
- Sun. 4/13** Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy, 9AM
Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Mon. 4/14** Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Tue. 4/15** Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Wed. 4/16** Matins of Holy Thursday, 6PM
- Thu. 4/17** Vespers of Holy Thursday, 9AM
Matins of Great & Holy Friday (Passion Gospels), 6PM
- Fri. 4/18** Royal Hours, 9AM
Vespers of Holy Friday (Burial Service), 3PM
Matins of Great & Holy Saturday, 6PM
- Sat. 4/19** Vespers of Holy Saturday, 9AM
Paschal Vigil (Nocturns, Matins & Divine Liturgy), 11PM
followed by picnic-style fellowship
- Sun. 4/20** Paschal Vespers, 1:30PM
followed by potluck and Egg Hunt
- Wed. 4/23** Vespers of Bright Thursday, 6PM
- Thu. 4/24** Bright Thursday Divine Liturgy, 9AM

*Christ Is Risen!
Indeed He Is Risen!*