

The Good News

Elevation of the Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Sacramento

Rector's Reflection

As we journey through Great Lent, we may be asking ourselves, what is all this effort for? Why all this fasting, why the prostrations and why the longer services in Church? Yes, the services are beautiful, but what is the point of all this in my life?

The short answer is to *know* God.

In answering this question, it's helpful to remember the Second Sunday of Lent when we commemorate St. Gregory Palamas. Because the reason he's remembered in Lent is that during his lifetime he had to answer these very same questions. At that time, some people began questioning and criticizing practices that we term 'asceticism' – our disciplines of prayer and fasting and the struggle against sin. These critics, not unlike some of our contemporaries, had a very rationalistic approach to faith, and argued that we can only know *about* God, but we can't really *know* Him.' So why bother making ourselves hungry and injuring our health for no reason, they questioned.

St. Gregory defended the Orthodox faith by upholding the centuries-long experience of the Church that it *is* possible to really know God, and not just know about Him. And that attentive prayer, fasting and the struggle to overcome our sinful passions is the way to come to know Him. It's not just a waste of time, but an aid in cultivating our relationship with the Living God. After all, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

Yes, there are things about God that always remain beyond our understanding because He's our Creator. In theological terms, we call this His essence. But God chooses to reveal



Himself to us in a real way through His energies and activity, both in the past (as we see in Holy Scripture) and even today. And He desires not only a relationship with us, but union with us. In fact that's the reason the Son of God became human, died for us and rose again – so that He would make it possible for us to share in His divine life for all time.

So as we fast, as we go to Church more often, as we give alms, and as we struggle to resist temptation, let's keep in mind this Lent why we're doing all this and what it's all for. Because it's not to lose weight or just become a better person. It's not to fulfill an obligation, nor to make God happy. Rather, it's a way to help us draw closer to our Lord and become more like Him so that His grace can dwell richly within us, and so we can know Him and be known by Him now and for all eternity.

Planning for the Inevitable

On Saturday, March 2nd, several Holy Cross parishioners traveled to St. Seraphim Cathedral in Santa Rosa for a workshop on the end of life called *Planning for the Inevitable*. The Planned Giving Ministry led us in planning for the legal and financial aspects of end of life and Fr. Lawrence Margitch and Fr. Matthew Tate from Annunciation Orthodox Church in Milwaukie, Oregon shared their experience in a presentation called *Death and Funerals, the Orthodox Christian Way*. They emphasized the role of local Orthodox Christians in the simple and beautiful rites from preparation of the body to respectful and peaceful burial, the center of which is the prayers of the church with the deceased.

Building Program Updates



We have now passed the \$900,000 mark in our building fundraising! Thank you to all who contributed to the Book and Icon sale in March and the \$10,000 Lenten matching challenge. It's not too late to make a donation during Lent to have it doubled! Please pray also that we will be able to obtain the permits needed to begin work on the first phase soon!

Annual Meeting

As is usual on the last Sunday of January, Holy Cross held its Annual Meeting after Liturgy. After the opening prayer, Fr. Timothy commenced the reports. The meeting ran smoothly with a strong sense of parish unity.

Our parish is growing with births and newcomers. We increasingly feel the need for a larger space, and the plans for our new temple are proceeding. The reports of the School, Education, and Charitable ministries are all strong overall. Ginny Nelson reported that the Food Program has had an increased number of walk-ins on Tuesday mornings and they welcome more food donations to share with our neighbors and volunteers to help distribute it.

The financial report was discussed and our parish remains at a positive net income. A change in reimbursement policy was also noted. Both the new policy and the 2023 Year End Financial Report are posted in the Hall.

We also elected the new Parish Council members and delegates to the Diocesan Council. The council thanked Catherine Plefka for her six years of service on the Council as she finished her second term. Our 2024 Parish Council is Claudia Dubovik (Vice President), Janet Ferrari (Treasurer), Dawn Heywood (Secretary), Janese Cederborg, David Lane, and Gabriel Read.

Homeschool Co-Op Returns



The Holy Cross Homeschool co-op has recently started up again. A group of five families are meeting twice a month where kids are able to take part in lessons studying Catechism, Art, Spanish, and Physical Education. Currently hosting classes for toddlers and elementary age students, we hope to have more families join us for our fall season and begin offering classes for older students as well. Our students have been enjoying learning about Lady Lent during Catechism, making Color Wheels in Art, preparing to say "Christ is Risen!" in Spanish for Pascha, and playing lots of games in PE & stories and songs during Toddler Time. During the summer months we would like to invite all families to join us for field trips to come together in fellowship through exploration of the area around us. Contact Christy Honeycutt (christy.honeycutt16@gmail.com) for more information.



Holy Week & Bright Week Schedule

- Sat. 4/27* Baptisms & Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, 9AM
Vigil of Palm Sunday, 5:30 PM
- Sun. 4/28* Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy, 9AM
Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Mon. 4/29* Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Tue. 4/30* Bridegroom Matins, 6PM
- Wed. 5/1* Matins of Great & Holy Thursday, 6PM
- Thu. 5/2* Vespers Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday, 9AM
Matins of Great & Holy Friday (Passion Gospels), 6PM
- Fri. 5/3* Royal Hours, 9AM
Vespers of Holy Friday (Burial Service), 3PM
Matins of Great & Holy Saturday, 6PM
- Sat. 5/4* Vespers Divine Liturgy of Holy Saturday, 9AM
Paschal Vigil (Nocturns, Matins & Divine Liturgy), 11PM followed by picnic-style fellowship
- Sun. 5/5* Paschal Vespers, 2PM followed by potluck and Egg Hunt
- Wed. 5/8* Vespers of Bright Thursday, 6PM
- Thu. 5/9* Bright Thursday Divine Liturgy, 9AM

*Christ Is Risen!
Indeed He Is Risen!*