

St. George Newsletter

August 2013

On fasting

priest Konstantin Slepinin

The Church of Christ commands its children to lead a life of moderation, especially dedicating certain days and periods to mandatory temperance -- fasting. The Old Testament saints fasted, and Christ Himself fasted.

With the exception of certain fast-free weeks, the Wednesdays and Fridays are the ordinary fasting days. The Wednesday fast is in memory of the betrayal of Christ by Judas, and the Friday fast remembers the sufferings and death of the Cross of the Savior. On these days, we do not eat meat or dairy products, eggs, fish (although there are many fasting days when fish is allowed). The weekday fasting is strictest in the period between the Sunday of All Saints (the first Sunday after Pentecost) and Christmas.

There are four multi-day fasting periods in the year. The longest and strictest is Great Lent, which lasts for seven weeks before Easter. The strictest of these weeks are the first and last, Holy Week. This fast is set in commemoration of the Savior's forty-day fasting in the desert.

Nearly as strict as Great Lent is the Dormition Fast, but it is shorter -- from August 14-27. In this fast, the holy Church remembers the most-holy Mother of God, Who stands before God continually, praying for us. In these strict fasts, fish is allowed only three times -- on the holidays of Annunciation (April 7), Palm Sunday (the week before Easter), and Transfiguration (August 19).

The Christmas fast lasts 40 days, from November 28 until January 6. In this fast, fish is allowed outside of Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. After St. Nicholas day (December 19),

fish is allowed only on weekends, and on the days between January 2 and January 6, full strictness is observed.

The fourth fast is the fast of the apostles Peter and Paul. It begins on the week of All Saints and continues until the day of the commemoration of Sts. Peter and Paul on July 12. The rules for this fast are similar to those of the Christmas fast.

Special fast days include the eve of Theophany (January 18), and the holidays of the beheading of St. John the Baptist (September 11) and the Elevation of the Cross of the Lord (September 27).

A certain relaxing of the fasting rules is allowed for the sick and for those who work at hard labor and for pregnant and nursing women. This is done so that fasting does not lead to a sharp decline in strength, and so that the Christian is not too weak to fulfill his prayer rule and necessary work.

But fasting should not be only physical, but spiritual. "He who thinks that fasting is only moderation in food, errs," writes St. John Chrysostom, "True fasting is avoidance of evil, control of the tongue, cutting off of the passions, laying aside of anger, cessation of cursing, lying, and oath-breaking."

The body, during fasting, not borne down by heavy foods, becomes more receptive to the gifts of grace. Fasting strangles anger, controls the outbursts of the heart, emboldens the mind, brings peace to the soul, and makes excess a stranger.

Fasting a pleasing fast, as St. Basil the Great says, remaining a stranger to all forms of sin committed in all of our feelings, we fulfill the

pious duty of Orthodox Christians.

About God

archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy

God created the whole world **out of nothing**, by His Word alone. God can do all that He wishes. God is the highest existence. There is no one nor anything equal to Him anywhere, neither on earth nor in Heaven. We, mankind, cannot fully comprehend Him by our reason. We would know nothing about Him unless He Himself had not revealed it to us. What we know about God has all been revealed to us by God Himself.

When God created the first people, Adam and Eve, He appeared to them in Paradise, revealing Himself to them, revealed how He created the world, and how people must believe in the One True God and fulfill His will. This teaching of God was first passed on orally from generation to generation, but later, at the inspiration of God, it was written down by Moses and by the other prophets in the sacred books.

Finally, the **very Son of God, Jesus Christ**, appeared on earth and revealed all that mankind needs to know about God. He revealed to mankind a great mystery: **God is One** but a **Trinity in Three Persons**. The first Person is **God the Father**; the second Person is **God the Son**, the third Person is **God the Holy Spirit**. These are not three gods but one God in three Persons, **the Trinity in one essence and indivisible**.

All three Persons have the same divine dignity; there is not a senior one among them nor a junior; as **God the Father** is true **God**, so also **God the Son** is true **God**, and likewise, the **Holy Spirit** is true **God**.

They are different only in that **God the Father** is not begotten and does not proceed from anyone **God the Son is begotten** of God the Father; the **Holy Spirit proceeds** from God the Father.

Jesus Christ through the revelation of the myster

to worship God truly, but also to love God as all three Persons of the Most-holy Trinity — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All eternally abide with one another in unceasing love and make up one Being. God is all-perfect love.

The great mystery, which God revealed to us concerning Himself, is **the mystery of the Holy Trinity**, which our weak mind cannot contain or understand.

St. Cyril, the teacher of the Slavs, tried to explain the mystery of the Most-holy Trinity. He said, "Do you see in the heavens the brilliant sphere of the sun and how from it light is begotten and warmth proceeds? God the Father is like the sphere of the sun, without beginning or end. From Him is eternally begotten God the Son, like light from the sun; just as there comes warmth together with light from the sun, the Holy Spirit proceeds. Each one is distinguished separately: the sphere of the sun and the light and the warmth — these are not three suns, but one sun in the heavens. So also, in the Holy Trinity: there are three Persons but God is one and indivisible." Blessed Augustine says: "You see the Trinity if you see love." This means that we can understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity more readily with the heart, that is by love, than with our feeble mind.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was written down by His disciples in a sacred book, which is called the **Gospel**. The original word for Gospel is the Greek word *Evangelion*, which means glad tidings or good news.

The sacred books, gathered together into one book, are called the **Bible**. This is from Greek word which means "**book**."

of the All-holy Trinity taught us not only

On commemoration at Liturgy

priest Michael van Opstall

The most important service of our Church is the divine Liturgy. It is served every Sunday, and more often.

The word *liturgy* means “common work”. It is a meeting of the faithful, praying for themselves and others.

We all pray at home and in church. But the most powerful prayers are those that are offered to God during the Liturgy. The main part of Liturgy is the transformation of ordinary bread and wine into the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is how Liturgy differs from all other services. In this transformation, in appearance and taste, the Body and Blood remains like bread and wine. But the Lord has promised us this communion as spiritual food, and partaking of it, we, the Orthodox, believe that we are truly uniting ourselves with God.

Communion does not work on us automatically, but helps us to come closer to God, and in that state, we try to do more good, and be how God is.

In the Old Testament, we read, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” But we have no bloody sacrifices. The Lord once for all offered Himself as a sacrifice. And His Blood cleanses us.

Thus, after all of those who desire and have prepared for communion have communed, the priest washing particles of bread (*prosphora*) in the Blood of the Lord. Each particle represents a member of our church.

We, the faithful, coming into church, write commemoration slips for the health and repose of our living and departed Orthodox friends and relatives. As the Lord said that the Church is His Body, it is not possible to commemorate at Liturgy those who do not belong to this body.

our commemoration slips.

Then we buy a *prosphora* (church bread) and place this on the tray in the church together with the commemoration slips. The priest will read all of these slips and cut particles out of the *prosphora*. These particles then represent our friends and relatives.

We may also turn in for annual commemoration in a commemoration book. To do this, we pay once for all of our *prosphora* for a year. Then we write in a book the names of our Orthodox friends and relative. The priest takes these books before the beginning of service and reads them together with the commemoration slips. Going in to church, you need only take a *prosphora* from the basket and place it on the tray.

The priest only takes out small particles. The rest of the *prosphora* is given back to you after communion. Keep in mind that your children may want to eat a *prosphora* after service, and order enough *prosphora* to allow for this.

After the Cherubic Hymn, there is no more commemoration at Liturgy. So do not be late to service!

School is starting!

Studies in our parish school begin August 31. *It is very important* to bring your children to church school, not only so they would learn their faith, but also so they would get used to Orthodox life (in particular, attendance at evening services). The lessons begin at 5:00 pm on Saturdays.

The children will study the Law of God and also do crafts and games. Sign up today!

We also need volunteers to help in the school with doing crafts and games with the kids. Please contact Fr. Michael to help:

Thus, non-Orthodox are not commemorated at stgeoslc@yahoo.com.
Liturgy. We can (and should!) pray for them in
private prayers and light candles for them in
church. But we do not include their names on

Приходская школа св. Иоанна Кронштадтского

St. John of Kronstadt Parish School

Учение в нашей школе начинается 31 августа. Уроки начинаются в 17.00 по субботам перед всенощной. Дети будут учиться Закону Божию, и будут заниматься разными рукоделиями.

Ожидается, что дети будут на уроках каждую субботу, прилично одеты, и что они будут посещать всенощную до помазания (около 19.00), и регулярно будут причащаться.

Studies in our parish school begin August 31. The lessons each week begin promptly at 5:00 pm on Saturday before the vigil service. The students will learn the basics of the faith, and will do various crafts and games.

Students are expected to be on time every week, properly dressed for church. It is also expected that students stay for the first part of the vigil, until the anointing (about 7:00 pm) and regularly receive communion.

Мы (я), родител(и), обещают привести наших детей в школу, и следовать за вышеупомянутыми правилами.

We (I), the parent(s), promise to bring our children to parish school, and abide by the rules above.

Имена детей/Names of Children:

Подпись родителя/Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____