

St. George Newsletter

February 2012

This year, the celebration of the New-martyrs and Confessors of Russia will be held on February 5. This will mark the 30th anniversary of the first church built in honor of the new-martyrs, which is located in our diocese. We give below a sermon, read in 2008, by the rector of that church.

Sermon on the Feast of the New Martyrs of Russia (2008)

Priest Sergei SVESHNIKOV

In the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit!

Dear in Christ Fathers, brothers, sisters, and children,

Today we celebrate the memory of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, the heavenly intercessors for our parish. Their memory is precious to us for many reasons—some personal, some that relate to the entire Russian Church.

Since ancient times, the Christian Church has been strengthened by examples of its martyrs' unshakable faith. These examples, passed down through generations of Christians, have nurtured and strengthened the Holy Church. From the times of the Apostles, Christians have gathered around the holy relics of martyrs, celebrating their memory and looking up to their standing in faith despite torture and persecution as a source of strength and inspiration in their own spiritual lives.

Undoubtedly, the new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church recalled the holy examples of the ancient martyrs as they themselves were tortured, persecuted, and exiled by the Communist regime. Countless faithful of the twentieth century—members of

the Royal Family and peasants, professors and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, clergy and lay people, men, women, and children—united around the memory of Christian martyrs, and through their intercession were able to defeat the torturers through unwavering standing in their faith in Christ.

History always repeats itself not only in its worst examples but also in its best. In our time, we, the spiritual and very often direct descendants of the countless new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church, united around their memory, and through their intercession became witnesses of the great miracle of God—the unification of the Russian Church after eighty years of separation. Built at the time when the executioners were still in the Kremlin, our little church in Mulino became the first temple in the world to be consecrated to the memory of the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia. But today, only a quarter of a century later, we see churches honoring the new martyrs and confessors not only outside of Russia, but also in places where not too long ago were heard pre-execution prayers of the new martyrs. Now, as if continuing their prayers, the words of the Divine Liturgy ascend from the holy ground of the Butovo polygon and other places soaked in the blood of the new martyrs.

Let us always have the holy example of the new martyrs before our eyes as we live our lives. Let us find the source of their strength and drink of this fountain of immortality. As we go about our lives, sometimes giving to God five or ten minutes of our day, sometimes a couple of hours from our week, sometimes even less, let us remember those who gave all, their whole lives and their earthly end to God. Let us ask that God, through the prayers of the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia, grant us strength to live our lives the way they lived theirs—in an unshakable faith in Christ and in

service to His Holy Church.

Amen!

February 10, 2008

The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord (February 15 on the new style), unfortunately, is one of the least popular holidays of the church year. It is also a bit of a puzzle: according to its name, it is a holiday of the Lord, but the church is dressed in blue as on a holiday of the Theotokos. Although, of course, on every holiday of the Theotokos we honor her because of the Son that she bore, the Meeting is the only holiday that is truly both a holiday of the Lord and of His Mother.

The Meeting of the Lord

metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)

The holiday that we celebrate today is simultaneously a holiday of a wondrous meeting and a first separation. A wondrous meeting because the Only-Begotten Son of God, having become the Son of the Virgin, is brought into the temple to be presented before the face of the living eternal God, His Father before the creation of the world.

It is also a meeting between holy souls and the Savior they had been waiting for; Simeon and Anna had lived long, complex, holy lives. To both it was promised that they would not die until they saw their Savior face-to-face. And on this day it happened that these righteous ones met God become man. "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word," said Simeon, "for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation..." Now he can go into eternity, now he can descend into the world of the dead and bring there the first news that he saw God on the earth, come in the flesh.

At the same time, this holiday is the first sacrificial separation of the Mother of God with Her divine Son. Every male child that opens the womb, that is, the firstborn in the family, is brought to God and made the property of God.

This custom, this rule began in antiquity, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. The hardened heart of Pharaoh did not want to release his slaves, and plague after plague affected the Egyptian land, so that man would remember that he is always under the heavy, yet salvific, hand of God. One of the most terrible punishments laid on Pharaoh for opposing God was the death of all the firstborn of the land of Egypt. This price shook the hardened heart of Pharaoh, and Israelite children by this price, which foreshadowed Christ, received their freedom.

But when they went into the wilderness, the voice of God came unto them: By this terror, by this death of children, by this deprivation of mothers of their beloved children you were brought out of Egypt, out of a land of captivity and slavery; but as a remembrance of this, as if for a payment for these children and these mothers, every firstborn male child from every one of your families must be brought into the temple, and God will receive the power of life or death over him.

And thus, bringing Her Infant into the temple, the Mother of God brought Him as a sacrifice to God. For the first time, of her own free will, according to the law of her people, she gave away to God Him who was born of her. This sacrifice continues throughout her whole life. She gave Him away once and for all, and God the Father accepted this sacrifice, unique in the history of the whole world, and it became the bloody sacrifice of Golgotha.

Today we also read about another meeting: how the Publican and the Pharisee went into the temple, into the very temple where the living God awaits His children. One came in with pride, the other -- with a broken heart. This is also a meeting, but in this meeting there is no sacrifice, but judgment and salvation.

Each of us at some time, on the day of our churching, was brought into the temple. Each of us was presented before God, in order to become His property, but in the Church of Christ there is no male and female, there is no distinction -- all are God's children -- so all of us

are brought and placed before God, just as the God-child Christ was brought by His Mother.

Each mother that stands here today, at some point brought her child and gave him or her up to God, and received him or her back at the icon of the Savior or the Mother of God. Each of us again and again meets God every time that he comes into church: which of us is a publican, and which is a pharisee? Who goes out justified, and who goes out with his corrupt self-righteousness, which does not lead to the kingdom of God? Simeon and Anna waited for Christ and saw Him; the publican awaited only judgment, and received mercy; the pharisee thought that he was righteous, and it turned out he was not at all...

This is how we begin this ascent to the preparatory weeks to Great Lent. Let each of us think over what it means that he or she at one time was brought into the temple, given over to God out of a mother's love, given over to the protection of Him, Who is the protector of children, given over to Him, Who is the Lord and Life. Let us think if we are up to meeting Christ as Simeon and Anna met Him; let us think about who we are: the pharisee or the saved publican. Amen.

GALA BANQUET 2012

Dinner, dancing, and entertainment

Friday, February 10th

from 6:30 pm

ARBAT BANQUET HALL

375 E 3300 S
SALT LAKE CITY

TICKETS

\$100

TABLES (10 SEATS)

\$900

PURCHASE EVENT TICKETS ON OUR

WEBSITE:

stgeorgeslc.org

OR CALL:

(801) 281-5560

OR BUY IN PERSON AT

SUNDAY LUNCHES

Pilgrimage to Orthodox Seattle

From March 11-15, our parish is planning a pilgrimage to the Orthodox places of Seattle.

March 11: After Liturgy in our church on the day of St. Gregory Palamas, we will set out to St. Seraphim's parish in Boise, the closest parish of the Russian Orthodox Church to ours. There we will pray at the evening service, socialize with the rector and parishioners, and spend the night.

March 12: Early in the morning we will set out for Seattle. During the day we will have opportunities to visit some of the famous attractions of Seattle, including the Pike Place Market and Seattle Center. We plan to visit the oldest Orthodox church in Seattle - the church of St. Spyridon of Tremithus. This church was a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church until the 1970s when it passed over into the American jurisdiction. Now a priest from Russia serves in this church. We will finish the day with dinner in Seattle's Chinatown.

March 13: Not far from the city, on Vashon Island is one of the two monasteries of our diocese (the other is located in Mexico). We will ride the ferry to the island and experience the beautiful nature of the area. At the monastery we will take a tour and spend time with the abbot and the brethren. In the evening we will attend services at St. Nicholas Cathedral, and all prepare for communion.

March 14: The local saint of our Church -- St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco -- reposed at the cathedral in Seattle while visiting the parish with the Kursk-Root icon. Now a chapel is set up in the room of his repose. We will attend and take communion at the Liturgy of Pre-sanctified Gifts in this chapel. Afterwards, we will be able to spend time with the rector before heading home.

March 14: We will arrive home in Salt Lake City.

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