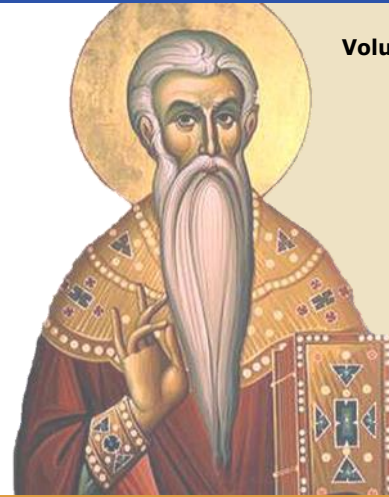


in Touch



Volume 25, Issue 3

March 2017

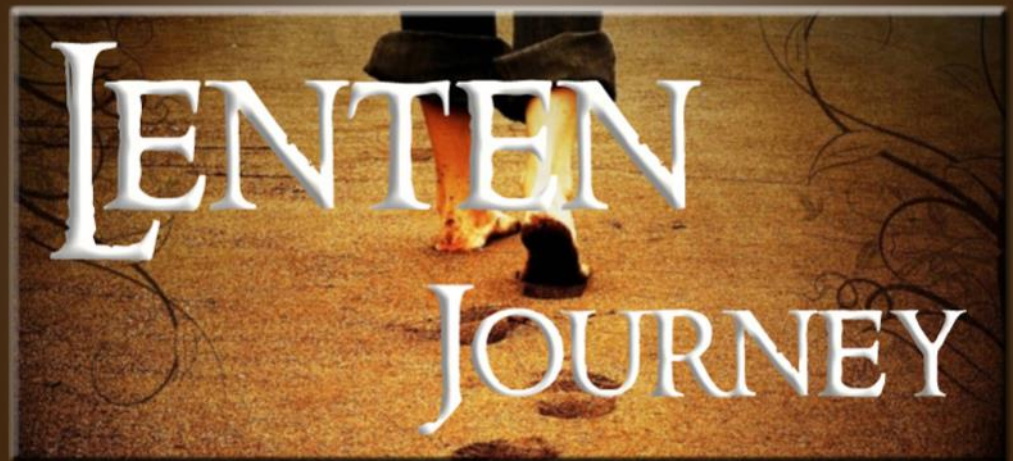
The Official Publication of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church

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Great Lent Begins Monday, February 27

Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your blessing on all. — St. Haralambos

Feastday Services and Icon Blessing

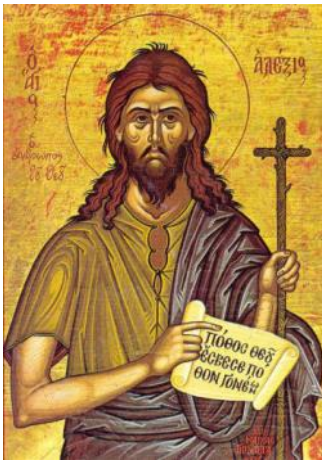
12 new icons of Saints of the Orthodox Church were blessed during the Vespers of Saint Haralambos on Thursday, Feb. 9. Hand painted by Khourie Randa Azar of Phoenix, the icons will soon be installed on the walls of the Nave. The icons are of Saints Alexios, Anastasia, Andrew, Anna, Constantine and Helen, Demetrios, Irene, Katherine, Marina, Nektarios, Panteleimon and Stephen. Brief biographies of the life of each of the saints were read during the service. The biographies will be included in this and future issues of our In Touch newsletter.



Lives of the Saints

Beginning this month, the In Touch newsletter will be printing the biographies of the saints depicted in the new icons recently blessed for our church interior. This month will include saints Alexios, Anastasia and Andrew.

Saint Alexios, the Man of God



The rare title, "Man of God," was bestowed on St. Alexios for the manner in which he gave himself over to Jesus Christ.

Alexios was born in 380 AD in the city of Rome during the reign of Theodosios the Great and was raised in a royal household by his parents who saw a love for the Church in their son, a religious fervor they did

not share, and which they sought to discourage for fear they would lose him. They lost no time in arranging for his marriage and in impressing upon him the debt he owed to his parents, for which he should respect their wishes in all things. He had reluctantly suppressed the call he felt to the Lord's service and had agreed to the marriage when he had a vision one day of St. Paul, who said he should answer the call to God at all costs, reading to him the passage in the gospel of St. Matthew which says: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

The bewildered Alexios was torn between his sense of duty to his parents and that urging to serve the Lord, but eventually decided to go through with what he had promised his family. However, when his wedding ceremony had been completed he looked upon the Cross of Jesus and without a word walked away from bride, family and friends.

He entered into a Syrian monastery where for the next eighteen years he assumed another identity, and never looked back at Rome. Having made a choice they had opposed, he suspected his parents had disinherited him and that his bride had had the marriage annulled, but this was not the case. As a matter of fact, the bride had gone to live with his parents in the fond hope that Alexios would someday return, and the parents spared no expense in trying to locate their son, but after eighteen years with no word from him they presumed him to be dead.

Nostalgia seized him and he returned to the family estate, primarily to get a glimpse of his folks, but when they failed to recognize him he stayed as spiritual counsellor, not only to the estate, but to the neighboring families as well. His abandoned bride was still living with the parents and she also failed to recognize him, for which he was grateful, enabling him

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Great Lent

This year, Great Lent for Orthodox Christians begins on Monday, Feb. 27, 2017. It is intended as a time to focus on our spiritual growth and health; a time for us to move out of our comfort zones, away from our normal routines, towards a more Christ-centered and spiritually-focused life. This is why Great Lent is referred to as a spiritual journey, one that leads us to a joyful celebration of the Lord's holy Resurrection.

During the Lenten Journey, we are called to work specifically in three areas: Prayer, Fasting and Works of Charity. The first is to build up our prayer life, both in quantity and quality. The second is to help us take control of our physical desires, and the third to practice charity, giving material or financial assistance to others in need.

The Lenten Journey is one we take together, as an Orthodox Christian community. The journey begins on the eve of Lent, with the Vespers of Forgiveness, bringing us together to ask for forgiveness before beginning our journey. This is why the first day of Lent is known as Clean Monday.

Before meals, at the start of the day, for the health of others, in times of sorrow, or for expressing thanks, prayer is our time with God. However brief, whether with the aid of printed prayers or in our own words, the first discipline of the Lenten Journey is prayer.

Try to establish a daily Rule of Prayer during Lent. This means praying at the same time each day or each evening. It might be difficult at first, but stick with it, and you'll find it not just easier, but more fulfilling as time goes on.

To help make your prayer time count, find a place and time without distractions. Rather than trying to squeeze in time for prayer, make an appointment, just as you would to see your doctor, to keep the time free of other activities. Prayers on your own, in a quiet environment, can help us feel the presence of God.

Regarding Fasting, the Orthodox Church has continually taught the benefits of fasting especially during Great Lent. It should not be looked at as a way to lose a few pounds, or in a negative light as not being able to eat this or that type of food.

Let's look at two primary teachings about fasting. First, we can all use help taking control of our passions, and, for many, food is a big one. The Orthodox Church calls us to fast during Lent as a form of personal discipline, to lessen our impulse to eat whatever and whenever we want. Comfort foods, eaten without any self-control, often results in unhealthy weight gain and can lead to a variety of other health-related concerns.


Second, Orthodox Christianity teaches that fasting is not just about food, but behavior as well.

From the writings of St. John Chrysostom: "...for the honor of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices; since he who limits his fasting only to an abstinence from meats, is one who especially disparages it. Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works!"

So, although fasting is limiting both the amount and types of food we eat during Great Lent, if we

Prayers on your own, in a quiet environment, can help us feel the presence of God.

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**St. Haralambos
Greek Orthodox
Church**
www.stharalambos.org
Rev. Michael Pallad

Sunday Worship
Matins: 8:45 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10 a.m.

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Parish Council
Marina Finch
Dennis Georgen
Nardos Russom
Russ Skocypec
Solomon Woldesilassie

Clergy Column

(Continued from page 3)

are following all the rules on fasting but still keep anger, hatred and envy in our heart we have missed the point. Why? Because proper fasting teaches us to be more concerned with our spiritual growth, and becoming more like Christ. If our behavior - towards God and one another - does not change as a result of our fasting, all we've done is change our diet.

The third of the three main disciplines of the Lenten Journey is Works of Charity, also referred to as Almsgiving. This is what puts our faith into action.

The following are practical, real-life examples all of us can do to show love for our neighbors near and far. Feel free to participate in these or others of your own choosing.

- Located in Sun City, the Valley View Community Food Bank is always looking for volunteers to help sort and package food boxes.
- Visit www.projectmexico.org and see the many volunteer and donation opportunities to help support St. Innocent Orthodox Christian Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico.
- On the international level, become familiar with and support the work of International Orthodox Christian Charities. Visit www.IOCC.org.

Please stop by the Church Bookstore and take advantage of the various books and icons available. Books on Great Lent include: *The Lenten Spring* by Fr. Thomas Hopko; *Great Lent* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, and *the Lenten Covenant* by Fr. Leonidas Contos. Holy Week service books are also available for purchase.

As we get closer to Holy Week, our Sunday School will participate on Lazarus Saturday, Apr. 8, with the making of the Palm Crosses for Palm Sunday.

On Good Friday, Apr. 14, a half-day retreat is planned for our youth, which finishes in time for them to participate in the Vesper service at 3 pm.

For the evening Lamentations service on Good Friday, young girls are encouraged to participate as Myrrh-bearers. Finally, on Easter Sunday, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for our young people in the Church back yard.

As with any journey, it is best to begin the Lenten Journey with prayer, asking the Lord for guidance, strength and perseverance to help make your journey as rewarding as possible.

A Blessed Lent to all.

Birthdays



Dina Surman (1)
Costa Androulakis (2)
Joselyn Braddock (2)
Andreas Macrides (3)
Bayol Balog (5)
Kathryn Macrides (7)
Alice Hecht (8)
Russell Skocypec (9)
Mary Davis (11)
Sandra Amoroso (13)
Peter Batalis (13)
Peter Gavrilidis (13)
Christopher King (13)
Dorothy Masley (14)
Patricia Christie (17)
William Retsinas (17)
Malia Panousopoulos (19)
Nick Milonas (23)
Maria Papamatheakis (25)
Argiro Selles (25)
William Kauble (29)
Eleni Haidopoulos (30)

If you don't see your name, or those of family members, and would like to be included on the monthly birthday listing, please send the information to the church office.



Lives of the Saints

(Continued from page 2)

to continue to serve the Lord while not revealing his true identity. After many years, when he felt death drawing near, Alexios wrote a letter to his family in which he expressed his love for them, which he could not do in life. The scroll in his icon reads, "The love of Christ quenched the love of parents." The feastday of Saint Alexios is Mar. 17.

Saint Anastasia



This Saint, who was from Rome, was a wealthy, and virtuous maiden. It was her mother who instructed her in the Faith of Christ.

Anastasia was married, but was widowed after a short time. Afterwards, she went about secretly to the dwellings of the poor and the prisons where the Martyrs of Christ were, and brought them whatever was needed for their daily subsistence. She washed their wounds and loosed them from their fetters, and consoled them in their anguish.

Also, because the Saint, through her intercessions, has healed many from the ill effects of spells, potions, poisons, and other harmful substances, she has received the name "Deliverer from Potions." Since the fame of her deeds had spread about, she was arrested by Emperor Diocletian's soldiers, and after enduring many torments she was put to death by fire in the year 290. Her feastday is celebrated on December 22.

Saint Andrew the Apostle

This Saint was from Bethsaida of Galilee; he was the son of Jonas and the brother of Saint Peter, the chief of the Apostles. He had first been a disciple of John the Baptist; afterwards, on hearing the Baptist's witness concerning Jesus, when he pointed Him out with his finger and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world", he immediately followed Christ, and became His first disciple, which is why he is called the First-called of the Apostles.

After the Ascension of the Savior, he preached in various lands; and having suffered many things for His Name's sake, he died in Patras of Achaia, where he was crucified on a cross in the shape of an "X," the first letter of "Christ" in Greek; this cross is also the symbol of Saint Andrew.

The feastday of Saint Andrew is November 30.



Name Days

Many years/*Chronia Polla* to those named after the following saints:

- St. Theodotos (2nd)
- St. Mark (5th)
- St. Theophylaktos (8th)
- St. Symeon the New Theologian (12th)
- St. Aristobulos (15th)
- St. Panharios (19th)
- St. Myron (20th)
- St. Euthymios (22nd)
- St. Parthenios (24th)
- St. John of the Ladder (Climacos) (30th)

MARCH 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 6:00pm Divine Liturgy Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Lenten Dinner Following)	2 7:00pm Choir	3 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (1st stanza)	4 9:00am Divine Liturgy Saturday of Souls
5 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy First Sunday of Lent 6:00pm Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers	6 6:30pm Philoptochos	7 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm Lenten Compline Service	8 6:00pm Divine Liturgy Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Lenten Dinner Following)	9 7:00pm Choir	10 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (2nd stanza)	11
12 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Second Sunday of Lent 6:00pm Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers	13	14 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm Lenten Compline Service	15 6:00pm Divine Liturgy Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Lenten Dinner Following)	16 7:00pm Choir	17 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (3rd stanza)	18
19 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Third Sunday of Lent IOCC Offering 6:00pm Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers	20	21 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm Lenten Compline Service	22 6:00pm Divine Liturgy Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Lenten Dinner Following)	23 7:00pm Choir	24 3:00pm Akathist Hymn (4th stanza) 7:00pm Vespers	25 9:00am Divine Liturgy Annunciation of the Theotokos
26 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Fourth Sunday of Lent 6:00pm Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers	27	28 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm Lenten Compline Service	29 6:00pm Divine Liturgy Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Lenten Dinner Following)	30 7:00pm Choir	31 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (complete)	