

THE GIFT GIVER

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LENT PASCHA 2011

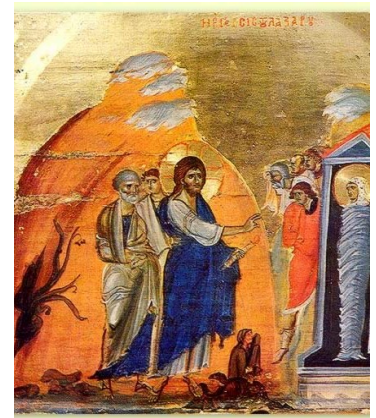
THE PASTOR'S REFLECTIONS

I had a very interesting (and positive) experience giving a talk on icons and Church history at a local Catholic Jr. High School, recently. Before I went in I had to do a sort of superman in the telephone booth change into my clerical collar and suit jacket in my car (I had worn the wore my clerical shirt to the secular school I work at under an innocuous sweater). This quick change made me think of the sad fact that believers often have to (or choose to) cover up their faith in the "real" world.

Now, in my case wearing a clergy shirt and collar to my secular job would not be appropriate, but the symbolism behind making that change is compelling. I've just read a book by Tatiana Goricheva describing her conversion in what was then Soviet Russia. She experienced harassment from the KGB and was finally expelled from the USSR just before the 1980 Moscow Olympics. While she was exiled to Western Europe she was appalled by how empty the spiritual life of "free" people was--even churchgoers and clergy.

Compared to Russia, where the Church was under extreme stress from the Communist government, the western churches had absolute freedom. Yet, in Russia under police harassment, believers felt as if they were the freest of all people. Their lives had been redeemed from the empty meaninglessness of atheism and filled with the light of Christ. Whereas, in Western Europe (and America), even believers were infected by the meaninglessness of consumerism. Well dressed and well fed, churchgoers were often treated to pabulum sermons by priests who were more concerned with fitting in and entertaining their parishioners than with preaching the gospel. T. Goricheva's analysis of Christianity in the "free" world is devastatingly accurate.

Why is it that we, who are so free with other things, are embarrassed to show their faith in public? Why are we so tempted to hide the light that sustains us under a bushel? In doing so, we ultimately extinguish it in ourselves. We live in a strange and terrible society where it is perfectly acceptable to parade the most shameful and perverted things in public while the Gospel of Jesus Christ is kept as a dirty secret! And the saddest thing of all is that millions are starving to hear the good news of salvation, to hear that there is hope in the midst of despair and a Light that can overcome any darkness. Many of today's young people, who are being told that their broken lives are perfectly OK as they are, are, in reality, desperate for an alternative. But, they do not hear of that alternative, the alternative of Orthodox Christianity, because our voice is lost. Our churches are consumed with their own little congregational concerns, our priests are often overburdened with the need to hold down secular jobs, and our hierarchy is divided into hostile ethnic camps—each with their own agenda. Perhaps our embarrassment to bear public witness to our



The deeps are afraid at Your presence, O Lord. All the waters serve You, O Source of life. The gatekeepers of hell tremble before You, O Christ. The bars of death are broken by Your power. Lazarus rises from the grave at Your command, O Almighty Savior and Lover of mankind.

(Ode 4, Matins Lazarus Saturday)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

faith is grounded in the fear that should anyone actually pay attention to us they will see how empty and vapid we are. And, yet, we are taught in the Gospel that if we are ashamed of Christ, He will be ashamed of us (9:26) when He returns in glory.

What is the solution? It is never easy, but often simple. We, each and every one of us and all of us together need to return to our “first love”, that is, to Jesus Christ. He is the very core of our faith, our Savior, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is our God. Our love for Him is but a pale reflection of His love for us, yet, even that pale reflection will shine as a bright light in today’s world. In this Holy Lenten season, let’s make an effort to show that light to those around us—gently, but persistently. One of the most striking things in Tatiana Goricheva’s book was her description of how those who were converted to Orthodoxy were changed from anxious, fearful, despairing individuals into human beings who were serene and filled with joyous love, even in the face of persecution. The great mystery of “dying” to this world in order to “rise again” is part of our baptismal covenant. If we live for ourselves, we live in anxiety and fear; if we live for Christ, we are freed to love and delivered from fear. St. Paul expressed this mystery perfectly when he wrote:

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

An Easy Lenten Recipe “From Albanian Kitchens”

STUFFED TOMATOES

DOMATE ME ORIS

WITH RICE

12 sm. tomatoes	¼ c. olive oil
1 c. onions, chopped	3 tsp. salt
1 c. Italian parsley, chopped	¼ tsp. pepper
¾ c. Uncle Ben’s Converted Rice	2 c. water

Wash tomatoes. Cut stem end so that they will serve as a cover later and scoop out the center pulp to be used afterwards for stuffing.

Stuffing: Sauté onions with olive oil, salt and pepper until the onion is light brown. Add parsley and mix over low heat. Wash and drain rice. Add to onion mixture. Add tomato pulp and stir well for a few minutes.

Stuff tomatoes with this mixture. Replace tomato tops.

Place in a small, deep pan so that tomatoes are touching. Pour water over tomatoes. Bake at 375°. After half an hour, baste the tomatoes with their juice and push the tomatoes down in the pan since they have a tendency to rise. Continue to check the tomatoes every 15 minutes and baste. The tomatoes are done when there isn't any more juice for basting, about 1 hr. and 20 minutes.

The tomatoes should be taken out of the oven to cool. They may be eaten cold or warm.

PARISH NEWS

Advance Whole Pie Orders Albanian Day Picnic June 26, 2011

The Daughters of St. Nicholas are making plans for the Bake Table that is traditionally held at the Albanian Day Picnic on June 26.

If you are interested in placing an advance whole pie order for you or your friends, please let us know by June 12. Choices are: Spinach, Leek, Butternut Squash, and Sauerkraut.

Your order may be picked up at the church hall on Saturday, June 25, after 12 noon, or the day of the picnic, Sunday, June 26. Payment is due (\$32.00 per whole pie) at that time.

You may place your order by calling: Louise Majewski at 508-765-5039 or Gail Dimitri at 508-765-9412

Daughters of St. Nicholas Bake Table – Albanian Day Picnic June 26, 2011

To help with the bake table expenses associated with our annual church picnic, the Daughters of St. Nicholas are asking parishioners for their help in defraying the cost in the preparation of spinach pies and pastries that are sold on that day. We would appreciate your donation of frozen spinach, eggs, cottage cheese, or money.

Please contact Louise Majewski at 508-765-5039 or Gail Dimitri at 508-765-9412 regarding your donated item.

LENTEN CHURCH SCHOOL PROJECT

During Great Lent our Church School will be attempting to raise \$360 to purchase 3 goats for the Heifer Project. The goats will be used to start herds in places where there is hunger and poverty. Goat fur and milk provides warmth and high protein food and is a truly green and renewable way of helping to feed the world. Our Church school children will be raising funds from the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare Sunday—February 27) until Pascha.

If you would like to help, send a check to St. Nicholas Orthodox Church and label it: Heifer Project.

CHOIR

We are always looking for additional members for our choir. If you like to sing and are willing to be faithful in attending choir rehearsals and Sunday Liturgy, please speak with Barbara Zlotnick, our Choir Director.



LENT 2011 SCHEDULE OF SERVICES AT ST. NICHOLAS

WEDNESDAY MARCH 9, 2011—6:30 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT ST. NICHOLAS

1ST SUNDAY MARCH 13, 2011 (THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY)—10 AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST BASIL FOLLOWED BY THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY ICONS

WEDNESDAY MARCH 16, 2011—6:30 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT ST. MICHAEL'S

2ND SUNDAY MARCH 20, 2011 (ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)—10 AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL

THURSDAY MARCH 24, 2011—6:30 PM DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

3RD SUNDAY MARCH 27, 2011 (VENERATION OF THE CROSS)—10AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL

WEDNESDAY MARCH 30, 2011—6:30 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT ST. MICHAEL'S

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2011—7:00 PM AKATHIST STANZA IV ST. NICHOLAS, SOUTHBRIDGE HOMILY: FR. JOSEPH GALLICK

4TH SUNDAY APRIL 3, 2011 (ST. JOHN OF THE LADDER)—10 AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST BASIL

WEDNESDAY APRIL 6, 2011—6:30 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT ST. NICHOLAS

5TH SUNDAY APRIL 10, 2011 (ST. MARY OF EGYPT)—10 AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL

WEDNESDAY APRIL 13, 2011—6:30 PM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY AT ST. MICHAEL'S

FEAST OF PALMS AND HOLY WEEK

SATURDAY APRIL 16, 2011 (LAZARUS SATURDAY)—10 AM DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

PALM SUNDAY APRIL 17, 2011—10 AM BLESSING OF PALMS AND LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2011—6:30 PM HOLY UNCTION FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY OF HOLY THURSDAY

GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY APRIL 21, 2011—6:30 PM THE READING OF THE "TWELVE GOSPELS" (MATINS OF HOLY FRIDAY)

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 22, 2011—3PM THE VESPERS OF THE "TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS"

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 22, 2011—6:30 PM THE LAMENTATIONS SERVICE (MATINS OF HOLY SATURDAY)

SATURDAY APRIL 23, 2011—9:00 PM NOCTURNES, MATINS AND LITURGY OF PASCHA FOLLOWED BY THE AGAPE DINNER IN THE PARISH HALL