



Newsletter

Of the Eastern Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

On Looking Forward to the New Year

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
and auld lang syne?*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.*

The Year of Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2015, has at last come to an end! And what a year it has been! All of us can say "Praise be to God for all His gifts," or perhaps, "Glory be to God for all things," but whatever has transpired in our lives during the past year, good or bad, joys or sorrows, it is now past and we can and must look forward to the new year, 2016. How will it go? What will it bring to us and our lives and our church? And just what should we do about it?

The lyrics quoted above, compiled by the Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1788, is sung around the world now on New Year's Eve to bid the old year farewell and usher in the new one. It asks the question of whether or not we should just forget about what has happened to us in the "good old days" (*auld lang syne*) or those whom we have known and cherished, and gives the answer that we should not, but rather treat all things and people with a "cup of kindness."

Our memories of past years may be fond ones, or may be decidedly "un-fond", but they are now part of our lives and we must accept them as part of the spiritual journey upon which we are all traveling as we seek our way to heaven and the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As one person said, "Although the past can hurt, we can either run from it, or learn from it." (Actually, it wasn't a person; this is a quote from the Lion King, Mufasa, in the movie of the same name!)

On a more sober note, St. Seraphim of Sarov counsels us that we will need patience to persevere, that we "should pray constantly, thank God for everything that has happened to us, always be joyful, and not let the spirit of discouragement overwhelm us." Through the sacraments of the Church, especially Confession and Absolution, and Holy Communion, and together with all our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, we must keep the events of our lives in perspective as we struggle and strive to continue our journey.

The year 2016 promises to be an interesting one. It is both a national election year and a leap year. The Summer Olympics will be held in August in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A Great and Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, the first in 1,228 years, is planned to be held in Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkey, soon after the feast of Pentecost (19 June). This year will undoubtedly be full of interesting and amazing developments. Change is in store for us all!!



Pascha this year is very late (May 1), so the Lenten Fast doesn't start until the beginning of March. January and February, therefore, will be fairly quiet months for us to begin the new year in the church, except that two of the twelve great annual feasts of the Lord will occur during that time: The Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Jan. 6) and the Meeting of Christ in the Temple (Feb. 2), which everyone should plan to attend! (Shameless commercial announcement!).

The month of January in Latin is *Januarius*, which is derived from *ianua*, 'door', and is associated with the two-faced Roman god Janus. Janus has one face on the front of his head and another on the back of his head, so he both looks back to the past and forward to the future; hence, his patronage of the first month. Actually, in early Roman calendars, January and February were left out completely; they were considered "dead days", because they were so drear. They were only inserted later, when the calendar was reformed.

Also, the early Christians celebrated New Year on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, only changing to January 1 after that date became indelibly associated with New Year as the Roman Empire continued to expand. Now, the Orthodox Church begins the new ecclesiastical year on September 1 and observes the civil New Year on January 1.

Early Celtic Christian peoples in the British Isles celebrated New Year on November 1, All Saints' Day. And other calendars, such as the Hebrew and Muslim, which are based on the phases of the moon rather than the rotation of the earth around the sun, celebrate New Year on a different

(solar) date every year—rather confusing, isn't it?

As was said earlier, it is important to look back on what has happened to us in the past in order to sort out and understand our progress, or lack thereof; but, it is certainly more fruitful to look to the future, resolving to do better. As St. Herman of Alaska counseled the Russian naval officers he was meeting with, "from this day, from this hour, from this minute, we should strive to love God above all and to do His commandments." Christians don't look back so much as they look forward!

New Year's Eve is considered the time for folks to make resolutions for what they would like to do, or improve upon, in the coming year. Did you make some New Year's Resolutions this year? I hope you did, and that they are serious ones and that you will strive, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish them. As we tackle this task, we should take to heart the admonishment of St. Theophan the Recluse concerning Resolutions:

Since New Year's Day is the beginning of the days of the year, we ought to gather in our soul those thoughts, feelings, and dispositions that would direct our affairs throughout the year in a Christian way. We will find these the moment we bring to mind the meaning of New Year's Day in the spiritual life. In the spiritual life, New Year's Day is when one who has been living carelessly becomes zealous about salvation and pleasing God. When one makes this resolution, then all is rebuilt afresh both internally and externally, upon new beginnings—the old passes away and all is new. If you have this, renew it; if



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not, acquire it—and for you this will be New Year's Day.

A worthy celebration of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord and of the commemoration of St. Basil the Great is also connected with this. The essence of the change we have mentioned is that a person begins from this moment to live solely for his salvation, for God; whereas, previously he lived exclusively for himself, preparing destruction for himself. Now he abandons former habits, all comforts, and all in which he found pleasure. He cuts off passions and lustful dispositions and takes on works of strict self-denial. Such a change precisely represents that which, according to the Apostle Paul, the circumcision of the heart should be.

The celebration of the Circumcision of the Lord reminds us of this and obligates us to do it, while St. Basil the Great provides us an example to follow. So all the themes which crowd consciousness on New Year's Day come together into one—our inner renewal through the circumcision of the heart.

If it pleases the Lord to give someone this mind set on New Year's Day—that is, not only to think in such a way, but also to bring all of this into his life—he will celebrate New Year's Day in a most perfect Christian manner and will prepare for a Christian passage of the whole year. On the subsequent New Year's Day he will only have to renew and enliven what he has now taken on.”

However much of this mindset you are able to achieve during the coming year, in the midst of all the activities and turmoil of your everyday life, I wish you strength and perseverance in your determination to draw

closer to our Lord. Truly, in His Will is our peace. Here is an ancient Celtic Christian Blessing to help you on your way:

*God bless thy year
thy coming in
thy going out
thy rest, thy trav'ling about
the rough, the smooth
the bright, the drear
God bless thy year!*

May you have the very best of years!

In Christ's Love and Service,
Deacon Cuthbert Downs

Are You Prepared?

Is your family ready for an emergency? The Parish Emergency Response Team (PERT) wants to encourage and support you as you put together your communication plan and emergency kits. But that is not all that PERT is focusing on. We are working on strategies to respond to crisis that occur in the community and affect our parish. Our work includes hazard identification, a communication/notification system, establishing material resources, parish community planning, security, and the acquisition of needed emergency supplies.

Team members are attending PERT trainings in February and March. You may have seen the PERT notices in the in the weekly bulletin and on the bulletin board in the downstairs hallway across from the kitchen. We hope you are finding them



helpful as you make your personal emergency plans.

Our focus over the next few months will be on emergency preparedness. Oregonians are being urged by FEMA (the federal agency that promotes emergency preparedness) to make preparations for "the big one". Did you know that, about a month ago, a 4.7 magnitude earthquake occurred in Cherokee, Oklahoma, and a 3.9+ magnitude earthquake occurred near Medford, Oklahoma, on Christmas Day 2015? Small earthquakes continue to occur in Oklahoma several times per day.

Many states have experienced small earthquakes recently. So it makes sense to get going on our preparations as well. We will be preparing a display of a "Go Kit" and a "72-Hour Kit" so that you can see what should go into them and where you can obtain supplies. We will be posting information specific to earthquake preparedness in the weekly bulletin, on the bulletin board, and via the email system. We will occasionally distribute handouts to you with information that we hope you will find useful in making your personal plans.

Where can you go for more information? Two excellent resources are **Ready.gov** and **OPB Unprepared** (<http://www.opb.org/news/series/unprepared/>). You can take online trainings or print-off checklists to help you as you put your kits together. No excuses! We want you to stay safe and healthy should an earthquake or other disaster occur.

Another focal area is on developing a parish-wide communication system, most likely using a texting program. We will be needing help in setting this up from those

with computer skills. If you can help, please contact Jim Buchfuehrer or Fr.

Athanasius. And if you would like to participate in PERT, please call Fr. Athanasius. Other members of PERT include Jim Buchfuehrer, Steven Petrin, John Selander, and M. Elizabeth Lien.

Fr. Athanasius Shaw

A Wonderful Nativity Play!

As the lights went down and the musicians began to play *Silent Night*, the children entered the stage with candles for our parish's first Nativity Play in many years on Dec. 20 during coffee hour. The children worked hard to memorize their lines and practice their parts. Many families pitched in to make costumes, while Rimma Mosley graciously donated apparel for the Theotokos, a king, and an angel. A special thank you goes to Alia, Kara's first-grade daughter, who volunteered the morning of the play to play a key role of Joseph (Adam Wendel was home sick with the flu). We missed Adam, but Alia did a wonderful job filling in! Thank you to all those who helped make this such a sweet community event. We hope to stage another nativity play in 2016.

Narrator: Rebecca Olson
Prophecy: Melanie Strand
3 Kings: Shawn Wendel, Byron Baker, Levi Reynolds
Gabriel: Maddie Reynolds
Star bearer: Cecilia Strand
Mary: Katelynn Reynolds



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Joseph: Alia
Shepherds: Christopher Baker, Melanie Strand
Sheep: Aiden Strand, Madalena Larkins
Tax Collector: Byron Baker
Angels: Aquilina Larkins, Cecilia Strand
Lighting/Sound: David and Roman Jensen

Musicians: Emily Olson, Anna Olson, Peter Olson, Rebecca Olson, Deacon Cuthbert, Melanie Strand, and Aquilina Larkins

Thanks again!
Lori Jensen and Mat. Molly Shaw

Church Expansion Update

If you have been wondering when work will begin on our church expansion project, there is good news. Fr. Matthew, Christopher Burkett, and the builder met with the county recently and received approval for conditional use, which means we can move ahead with the conditions the county outlined for them. The builder is now working on the formal plans for the church expansion in preparation for submission to the county for approval of the plans. Stay tuned for further updates!

Don't Judge

When thoughts of passing judgment on another person cross your mind, pray God to take them away at once, so that you may love this person as He does. Then God will help you see your own faults. If Christ were visible, could you have such thoughts?

*The Ascetic of Love, by **Nun Gavriila***

Feasts and Fasts

Theophany - The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan (January 6)

The streams of the Jordan received Thee who art the fountain, and the Comforter descended in the form of a dove. He also bowed the heavens, bowed His head, and the clay cried aloud to Him that formed him, "Why dost Thou command of me what lies beyond my power?" For I have need to be baptized of Thee." O sinless Christ our God, glory to Thee.

(from the Theophany Vespers service)

Theophany celebrates the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan. (This feast is celebrated in the West as The Adoration of the Magi, the Three Kings.)

Theophany is marked by the ceremony of the Great Blessing of the Waters. The first blessing is held in church; the second, if possible, in the open air beside a river or spring, or at the sea shore. The culminating moment in this outdoor service is when the priest plunges the cross into the water three times, thus recalling the triple immersion of Christ in the Jordan, as well as the triple immersion that every Orthodox Christian undergoes at baptism.

Last year, over 140 people from five Colorado Orthodox parishes participated in the blessing of the waters by Archbishop Benjamin at 11,213 feet on the Continental Divide in Monarch, Colorado. You can see the video of this unique blessing of the waters by using this link: <https://vimeo.com/116435567> or go to www.theophany.org, scroll to the bottom



left of the first page to “Photos and Videos,” and click on “Divide Blessing ‘15”.

The basic meaning of Theophany (more specifically, “the manifestation of God”) is that Christ’s baptism in the Jordan is the beginning of His public ministry. Secondly, at this baptism, the Holy Trinity was revealed to the world. All three persons of the Holy Trinity were revealed to the world: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus, the Son received His Father’s testimony, and the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove, descending from the Father and resting upon the Son.

This manifestation of God is also expressed as the symbolism of light. In the words of the troparion of the feast, Christ has “appeared and enlightened the world.” Thus, besides the title of the feast being Theophany, this event is also known as the “Feast of Lights”. The Church celebrates on this day the illumination of the world by the light of Christ: “Light from Light”.

Along with manifestation and illumination, the third aspect of this feast is renewal, along with regeneration and re-creation. Christ’s baptism in the Jordan renews our nature. The water acts as a means of grace, which is why we Orthodox Christians are encouraged to drink from the water that has been blessed at Epiphany and to sprinkle themselves with it. We also take some of the blessed water to our home to use from time to time.

The Meeting of Our Lord - The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2)

Today the holy Mother who is higher than any temple, has come into the temple, disclosing to

the world the Maker of the world and Giver of the Law. Simeon the Elder receives Him in his arms and, venerating Him, he cries aloud: “Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, for I have seen Thee, the savior of our souls.” (from the Small Vespers of The Meeting of Our Lord)

This feast forms the conclusion of the Nativity sequence, which began about 80 days ago with the beginning of the Christmas fast. When Jesus was 40 days old, he is brought to the temple by his parents where he meets His chosen people in the persons of Simeon the Elder and Anna the Prophetess. Their commemoration follows naturally after the feast of The Meeting of our Lord, and they represent all that is best in the religion of Israel, Simeon being “righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel”, and Anna the prophet who “never left the temple, but worshipped there with fasting and prayer, day and night”.

St. Luke is the only evangelist to include this episode in the life of Our Lord (Lk 2:22-38). He depicts a scene of ideal Old Testament prophecy and presents Jesus as the awaited “light of revelation to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6 and 49:6).

The texts for this day are mainly based upon Simeon’s song. They speak of the salvation that Christ has brought and the glory and light of revelation that have been granted through His Incarnation.



Inner Peace

What is required and what lies ahead is intensified labor over oneself, over one's inner self, by the assimilation of good intention and by the enabling of grace through the *Mysteries*. This labor and effort is directed toward destroying the disorder that reigns inside; in its place it establishes order and harmony, after which follows inner peace and a continual joyful mood of the heart....

That is what lies ahead of you now! Do not think, however, that for this you must re-do everything or bind yourself to a lot of rules. Absolutely not. Two or three little rules, two or three precautions, is all you need....

Thus, the *first thing* is this: It is necessary to get in the habit of unceasing remembrance of God, along with fear and reverence.... Be with the Lord, no matter what you do; and turn to Him with your whole mind, trying to conduct yourself as you would in front of a king. You will soon get in the habit, just do not give up or break off....

Reverential attention in the one God will be established, and inner peace will come with Him. I say that it will be soon; however, this will take more than a day or two. These things require maybe a few months. Sometimes it takes years! Ask the Lord, and He Himself will help you.

As an aid, add the following rule to this: *Do not do anything that your conscience prohibits, and do not omit anything that it says to do, whether great or small....*

You must toil and, most importantly, do not give in to pleasing yourself or the world. There will be constant opposition to what you have begun. You must overcome

this; therefore, you must exert more force and, consequently, be patient....

That, then is all! Remember God with reverence, obey your conscience, and arm yourself with hope through patience.

The Spiritual Life and How To Attain It, by
St. Theophan the Recluse



Icons

The icons that fill the church may initially look like nice religious paintings, but they have an unsettling way of coming to life. You begin to feel like the people depicted are looking back at you, looking *through* you. "Here we are," they seem to say. "We lived for Christ. How about you?"

Welcome to the Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity, by
Frederica Mathewes-Green



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Recipe

Editor's Note: In every issue we will include an easy recipe that can be used for Fast Days or Fish and Oil days on the fasting calendar.

3 Ingredient Chili

Heat together:

- 1 can, chili-style chunky tomatoes
 - 1 can, vacuumed-packed, Mexican style corn
 - 1 can, black beans rinsed and drained
- Serve with cornbread

Mar 6	Broding
Mar 13	Green / Sherley
Mar 20	Molly Shaw & Maria Nash
Mar 27	Jensen / McMichael
Apr 3	Alex & Diana Shevchenko
Apr 10	Michael & Xenia McConnell
Apr 17	Walker & Boyd
Apr 24	Vallejos
May 1	PASCHA
May 8	Heineman

Hospitality Schedule

Sunday Coffee Hour – If you have a problem with schedule, just exchange with another family and inform Karen Barton (503-317-8121)

Thanks to all

Jan 3	Gerard/Shank
Jan 10	Selander/Johnson/ Aveling
Jan 17	Cazel
Jan 24	Stockett/ Derugin
Jan 31	Dorning/ Seylon Belai
Feb 7	Larkins
Feb 14	Green
Feb 21	Sarah & Roberto Silva
Feb 28	Tadesse / Martinsen

If you have submissions for the newsletter, please e-mail them to
Gail Cramer neptic123@yahoo.com