

Holy Apostles Newsletter

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



Holy Apostles Orthodox Mission

Fr. Dimitri Perez, Priest

(503) 860-2093 (Cell)

fr.dimitri@gmail.com

www.holy12.org

From The Holy Fathers

On the Most Holy Thetokos:

If it is made possible, I intend to come to you in order to see the faithful gathered in Jerusalem, and especially the Mother of Jesus: they say of her that she is honorable, affable, and arouses wonder in all, and all wish to see her. But who would not wish to see the Virgin and to converse with her who bore the true God? ...With us she is glorified as the Mother of God and the Virgin full of grace and virtue. They say of her that she is joyful in troubles and persecutions, does not grieve in poverty and want, and not only does not get angry with those who offend her but does good to them still more... All who see her are delighted.

St. Ignatius the God bearer

MY JOURNEY TO THE ORTHODOX FAITH by Rdr. Peter

By the grace of God I am a member of His Church. It's been an interesting journey getting here...

Growing up in a faithful Protestant family, my parents moved us from one tradition to another over the years. We prayed at mealtimes and went to church every Sunday; whether in a Mennonite or Lutheran context, the guiding principle for my parents was community.

Then in my adolescence in North Carolina, I found it necessary to reinvent myself. The faithful, straight-A student, wholesome kid needed to be cool. Enter Kurt Cobain, marijuana, sex, cigarettes, angst against authority, and the pride of youth. I was in control. New friends who did what they wanted helped show me the way. It was a speedy decline from light to darkness where hedonism and self-centeredness were the guiding principles.

Soon, I was accepted into an arts-intensive boarding school. Here I pursued the same wayward path, but I also began to search for something of substance to give meaning to life. I read the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Robert Anton Wilson, and dabbled in eastern religions. Nothing to serious, however. I didn't want anything to impede upon my freedom to continue a debased life.

Then the Hare Krishnas came one day and set up a table at the school. Their otherworldly chanting, vegetarian cuisine, and obvious devotion were appealing. Ancient Sanskrit texts gave an answer for every question of life, death, social order, morality, etc. I would visit their farming community on occasion, and was drawn to the intensity of their life. After another year and a half of more searching amidst drugs and a permissive art-school backdrop, I left everything and joined the devotees.

The simplest explanation of the Hare Krishna faith is that they are monotheistic, fundamentalist Hindus. They are ascetical, strict observers of the rules of conduct they have been given so as to surmount this false existence of material reality. 4 AM cold showers and a six-hour morning

devotional routine were the norm. All food was offered to idols which they regarded as an incarnation of God – one amongst many incarnations including Buddha, a 14th century Vaisnava (Vishnu-worshipping) charismatic, an enormous turtle, and others. Conspicuously absent from the recognized incarnations of God was the God-man Jesus Christ.

I have to say that for me, joining the Hare Krishnas was the means by which God drew me out from myself, got me off of drugs and out of a life of debauchery, and into environment where a relationship with God and others became relevant again. The fact that my parents were initially happy to know that I had joined the Hare Krishnas is testament to the depths to which I had fallen.

Somehow, though, despite all the answers the devotees offered, I could not reconcile the Jesus with whom I had grown up with all that I was experiencing. Finally, having encountered a Catholic street preacher in Boston, I left the devotees to seek after Christ.

As my first re-exposure to Christianity was via Catholicism, it seemed logical to me that this is where God wanted me. I knew that if I was to be a Christian, I wanted to follow Christ in an authentic manner, in the Church that had real grounds for its existence. I entered a Catholic catechuminate, but never finished. Part way through, I had a falling out with the catechist, and left distraught.

At this time, my parents casually mentioned that a friend was exploring Orthodoxy. I knew almost nothing of the Church... CONT. ON PAGE 2

I N S I D E	My Journey to Orthodoxy	1
	The Bishop's Visit	2
	Dormition Fast	3
	Almsgiving Opportunities	3

MY JOURNEY TO THE ORTHODOX FAITH (Cont.)

I looked in the phonebook for a local church and found St. Anne's in Corvallis, OR. At the time, they were meeting in a humble, converted house, with painted-out windows and shag carpet on the floor, an off-key choir, and small flock of parishioners. But despite the setting, the holiness of the Liturgy was awe-inspiring. I almost took my shoes off out of reverence! I was taken aback and knew in my heart that I was home. Whatever this faith might require of me, I was where I needed to be. From then on, the more I read and participated in the life of the Church, the more firmly I became convinced of the Orthodox Church's claim to being the Church. On Christmas Eve, 2001 I was baptized into a new life. And that is the beginning of the restoration of me as a person. Glory to God for His mercy and faithfulness in seeking His lost sheep!

Written by Reader Peter Van Denend. 

BISHOP BENJAMIN'S VISIT

We have the great joy and privilege of having our Bishop come to our parish to serve the Divine Liturgy with us on Sunday, September 6th. To adequately prepare for this honor, we will have a special potluck that day. The main dish, utensils, paper goods, and drinks will be provided. Each family please bring a generously-sized side dish as follows:

Families with the last names A - K, please bring a side dish to go with meat (e.g., a salad, scalloped potatoes, etc.)
Families with last name P - W, please bring a dessert.
Single person families please bring a loaf of bread.

When we serve others food, and especially our Bishop, we should strive to make a high-quality meal, giving only our best; this doesn't mean the food has to be "gourmet" but it should be something a little nicer than usual.

Here is a reminder of clergy etiquette:

Greeting Clergy in Person. When we address Deacons or Priests, we should use the title "Father." Bishops we should address as "Your Grace." Though all Bishops (including Patriarchs) are equal in the Orthodox Church, they do have different administrative duties and honors that accrue to their rank in this sense. Thus, "Your Eminence" is the proper title for Bishops with suffragans or assistant Bishops, Metropolitans, and most Archbishops (among the exceptions to this rule is the Archbishop of Athens, who is addressed as "Your Beatitude"). When we approach an Orthodox Presbyter or Bishop (but not a Deacon), we make a bow by reaching down and touching the floor with our right hand, place our right hand over the left (palms upward), and say: "Bless, Father" (or "Bless, Your Grace," or "Bless, Your Eminence," etc.). The Priest or Bishop then answers, "May the Lord bless you," blesses us with the Sign of the Cross, and places

his right hand in our hands. We kiss then his hand.

We should understand that when the Priest or Bishop blesses us, he forms his fingers to represent the Christogram "ICXC" a traditional abbreviation of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ" (i.e., the first and last letters of each of the words "IHCOYC XRICTOC"). Thus, the Priest's blessing is in the Name of Christ, as he emphasizes in his response to the believer's request for a blessing. We should also note that the reason that a lay person kisses the hand of a Priest or Bishop is to show respect to his Apostolic office. More importantly, however, since both hold the Holy Mysteries in their hands during the Divine Liturgy, we show respect to the Holy Eucharist when we kiss their hands. In fact, Saint John Chrysostomos once said that if one were to meet an Orthodox Priest walking along with an Angel, that he should greet the Priest first and kiss his hand, since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord. When we take leave of a Priest or Bishop, we should again ask for a blessing, just as we did when we first greeted him.

MONASTERY BENEFIT DINNER

Mark your calendar for the St. John the Forerunner Monastery Benefit Dinner, Sunday, Oct. 11, 2009. To be held at The Civic Ballroom, 323 4th Street, The Dalles, OR. Details to follow.

Kitchen Corner

Vegan Protein Shake (good for during the fasts)

1 cup rice, almond, or soy milk
Handful of sliced, roasted almonds
1/2 frozen berries of any kind (blueberries are especially high in antioxidants)
1/2 cup or so tofu

Blend and enjoy! Makes 1 8 oz. shake.

You can also do many variations on this shake. Add a banana, 2 Tbs. peanut butter, dried coconut, a scoop of protein powder (in place of the tofu).

If you want to be really healthful, add 2 Tbs. of flax seeds to enjoy a nice, nutty flavor (while at the same time helping to lower unhealthy cholesterol) Or you can add 2 Tbs. flax seed oil (available at Trader Joes)

And that is your Nutrition Tip 101 for the day. See our parish website for other fasting recipes!

POTLUCK COFFEE HOUR

We will continue having coffee hour potluck style. What a joy it is to break our Sunday fast together, and especially to be able to include our guests! First, thank you for continuing to generously bring food to share with guests and Church family. Please continue to bring something to contribute to the coffee hour (no matter how small), so we have enough food for our guests. If you cannot bring something to coffee hour one week, don't fret. You should not feel that you cannot eat because you didn't bring anything to share that Sunday. Maybe we can't all prepare food each week, but instead we can offer to help in other ways: perhaps fix coffee, sweep the floor, or stack chairs! The meal time is especially important during this phase of our parish life; it's a way to stay connected with each other and strengthen our relationships in Christ as well as to reach out to visitors. It's family time!

Clean-up teams have been updated as follows:

Team Blue - Harvey, Virosteck, Perez, Harvest
Team Green - Donnor, Campbell, Story, Tregub, Vaganova, Cable, Foat/Langston, Domico
Team Orange - VanDenend, Harmon, Beckel, Koehn, Topness, Semenak, Miminoshvili
Team Yellow - Ivkin, Watt, Kojenov, Harvison, Cortez

See the calendar for dates you are on clean-up. If you are unable to clean up on your day, make sure to trade with someone. Clean-up duties are light and include sweeping, cleaning the coffee maker, wiping down tables, stacking chairs, making sure everyone takes their dish home from coffee hour, etc. We should leave it the same way in which we arrived.

DORMITION FAST (Aug 14-28)

The fasting during the two-week Dormition fast (commemorating the falling asleep of the Mother of God) is like that during most of Great Lent:

Monday-Friday: Strict fast, which means omitting the following foods from your diet during the week: Meat, fish w/backbones (shellfish is permitted), eggs and dairy products, olive oil, and wine/all alcoholic beverages.

Saturday and Sunday: Wine and oil permitted.

Feast of Transfiguration (Wed, Aug 19): Fish, wine & oil permitted.

A note about fasting: The Church in her wisdom gives us these days of fasting for several reasons, one being of maintaining good health. It is a myth to think that not eating animal products is not healthy for the body. In fact, research has shown that a plant-based diet is healthier for the body than one consumed primarily by animal products. The "medical experts of our time" echo the words of the Holy Fathers. Read on!

"1.5 million deaths per year in the U.S. are from diseases associated with diets high in saturated fats and cholesterol. The major dietary sources of fat in the American diet are meat, poultry, fish, dairy products and fats and oils...Dietary cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin...Reduce consumption of saturated fat and cholesterol...Increase consumption of whole grain foods and cereal products, vegetables, and fruits. (Surgeon Report on Nutrition & Health)

Research has shown that many chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer, are largely caused by unhealthy dietary habits. One factor is in the area of diet and nutrition. Studies have shown that an animal-free diet, is an effective way to prevent, treat and reverse heart problems. As early as in the middle of the last century, scientists discovered that reducing consumption of animal products can significantly improve heart health. One of the forerunners in this area, Dr. Lester Morrison, a physician from California, studied the relationship between dietary habits and heart disease. His research, which lasted more than 12 years, revealed that reducing the consumption of meat, milk and egg products can significantly prolong a person's life. The study also showed that increasing the proportion of plant-based food in the daily diet can improve the health of patients with heart disease.

ALMSGIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Through God's grace, we were able to give the Aiello family a parting gift of a beloved icon and some financial help as well. It's good to remember that such gifts can be ongoing. Besides regular tithes and offerings, gifts may be made to the Church and designated for a specific use, such as seminarian support, monastery support, building fund, etc.

And speaking of almsgiving opportunities, there is no better time than an appointed fast of the Church to give Alms. With the Dormition fast approaching, we have a wonderful opportunity before us:

When the temperature soars to the 100's, we don't usually think of knitting a warm scarf or socks! But there is an Orthodox ministry called "Warm the Children" that accepts such items year-round, for distribution to orphans and the needy in several European countries. Warm knitted or crocheted articles of clothing, and small school supplies, paper icons, hard candies, and toiletries are all joyfully welcomed by the recipients. Please, no brand names/cartoon characters. Contact Emmelia Beckel if you need ideas or patterns, would like to get together to knit, or would like to contribute items (or money for shipping). A copy of a recent WTC newsletter will be available at Church. The photographs and letters of thanksgiving can warm our hearts as the items we send can warm the children! 