

# Holy Apostles Newsletter

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



Holy Apostles Orthodox Mission

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## From The Holy Fathers

He who suffers wrong and does not demand any reparation from the man who wronged him, trusts in Christ to make good the loss; and he is rewarded a hundredfold in this world and inherits eternal life (cf. Mk 10:30).

Saint Kosmas Aitolos +1779

The mercy of God is hidden in sufferings not of our choice; and if we accept such sufferings patiently, they bring us to repentance and deliver us from everlasting punishment.

Saint Kosmas Aitolos +1779

## CREATING A SANE FAMILY

**W**e have seen that our task as Christians is to become sane, but if we live in a family, we have an additional task: to make our family sane too. As spouses, we need to help our spouse to sanity; and as parents, we need to lead our children to sanity. But just as we so often lose sight of our quest for sanity in our own lives, even more do we forget about it with our families. And then, as one elder in Greece said:

“Just think, parents come and complain about all sorts of problems they face with their sons and daughters. I remind them that whatever they consider to be their child’s problem is really not the primary issue. The primary issue is whether their son or daughter has an authentic relationship with the living God. If not, then this vacuum will unavoidably be filled by vices such as drugs, promiscuity, drinking, sloth, you name it. But when they establish a right relationship with God, then all other problems will eventually find their resolution. That’s how things work.”

So often we parents forget about restoring sanity to our children and settle instead for trying to make them be good. We give them a set of rules we expect them to follow, and then we get angry or sad when they don’t follow them. But we do not set before them the real goal of Christian living. Remember, God does not want you or your children to be good, He wants you all to be holy. These are not the same thing at all. Goodness is following the rules, holiness is becoming like God. Deification is the route to sanity. Of course, if you become like God, you will generally be good, although at times your “goodness” will not agree with the world’s definition of goodness. But being good will never make you holy.

Parents at home are likely to reinforce this misunderstanding. They stress outward behavior. They want their children to be “good” in public; i.e., not to throw tantrums when they’re little, not to drink too

much, or use drugs, or drive too fast when they get older. But they don’t hold up the ideal of holiness. And even worse, they don’t show it in their own lives. Children are very perceptive. They see what really matters to their parents, and all too often they see that the Christian life is not what matters to their parents. They are expected to go to church on Sunday and major feast days, to fast, to say prayers in a rote way morning and evening, not to talk back, and generally not to fight too blatantly with their brothers and sisters. When they get older, they are told not to drink too much, not to give in to sexual temptations, not to drive too fast. And that’s it. That’s Christianity as far as they are concerned. These poor children can’t see any reason for the rules they’re given. They are just arbitrary. Who cares if you eat meat on Friday? Is God some kind of judge who keeps track of your faults in a big book? That idea is soon outgrown, and then there is no motivation for “being good.” Then the parents wonder why their children are not turning out the way they want them to. Why aren’t they going to church and being good Orthodox Christians?

But a better question is: why should they be good Orthodox Christians if they have never been given an understanding of what Orthodox Christianity is? If we raise them to think Christianity is no more than a set of unmotivated rules, imposed arbitrarily by a distant God for Whom we have no feeling and of Whom we have no knowledge, why would we expect them to follow those rules when they are old

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## **CREATING A SANE FAMILY (CON'T)**

enough to start thinking for themselves. We have made Christianity just another of the many competing religions, not the way to come to know the living God and become like Him. We have deprived our children of motivation, and they respond by being unmotivated.

So what can we do? The husband and wife have to start with themselves and their mutual relationship. Each of them must keep the true goal of Christianity before their eyes all the time, and they must use all the weapons and tools the Church offers to become sane Christians. They must be on guard all the time, lest they be corrupted and misled by the insanity of the world around them. They must think, study, compare, always asking if this thought or action is compatible with Christian sanity. They must be vigilant and watchful in their own lives, and focus on establishing a living relationship with God, a relationship which is not just intellectual, but which determines how they live in all aspects of their lives.

Along with this focus on their own individual holiness, the husband and the wife must each make it their goal in life to bring their spouse to holiness. Following the ideals of the world, even Christian people marry for completely wrong reasons. Some marry for sexual satisfaction, some marry for companionship, but in almost all cases they marry because they expect to get something from the marriage: support when they are down, understanding, etc. But a Christian should marry, not for what he or she can get, but for what they can give. The purpose of Christian marriage is not to be supported, but to support; not to be encouraged, but to encourage; not even to attain one's own salvation, but to help another to salvation. Too often a husband and wife act like fleas on a dog: all they want is to draw their own nourishment, not to nourish the other. But as Christians, our first concern must be our spouse's relationship with the Lord, leading to transfiguration and salvation. Husbands, you need to help your wives become holy! Wives, you need to lead your husbands to become like God!

To raise sane children in a sane kingdom, you cannot be satisfied with a set of rules. This is itself insanity, since it does not offer a reason for obedience to these rules. The children must be presented from their earliest years with the vision of what it means to lead a sane life, and they must be cautioned to understand that the world around them is insane in its opposition to God.

We Orthodox Christians have the most amazing, most powerful, most wonderful possibility offered to us: to become like God, to be deified, to be transfigured! But we don't present that possibility to our children, because we don't accept it for ourselves. Children are not stupid or blind. They see much more than we want them to see. We pay lip service to sanity, while we pursue the good things of this insane world in our own

## **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.

## **OKTOBERFEST**

Its that time of year again and we are planning for our annual Oktoberfest celebration - German attire encouraged! If you're new to our parish and never attended the Oktoberfest, you won't want to miss it! It really is a lot of fun and a nice way for us to celebrate the coming of Fall together!

When: Sunday, Oct. 4th

Time: 4 pm

Place: Kojenov home

Families with last names A-D bring a dessert; F-P bring a main dish; S-W bring a side dish....all German of course - and don't sweat over this! Remember this is meant to be fun, not stressful, so if you need ideas or recipes, contact Mat. Mary or "google" it. You can either buy something or make something easy. Ideas for the main dish include grilled sausages (e.g., bratwurst) or pork chops, side dishes include sauerkraut, grilled potatoes, potato salad, red cabbage, and desserts include ideas such as Bavarian creme pie, apple strudel, or chocolate German cake.

Haben Sie vielen Dank! (HAH-ben zee FEEL-en DAHNK) (Many thanks!)

## **Kitchen Corner**

Braised Cabbage Salad (a side-dish in the German tradition)

4 slices bacon, thinly sliced  
2 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced  
1 cinnamon stick  
2 bay leaves  
4 teaspoons kosher salt  
1 large or 2 small heads red cabbage (about 3 pounds), cored and thinly sliced  
1 Granny Smith apple, cored and cut into bite size pieces  
2 to 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
1/2 cup red wine vinegar  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Cook the bacon until crisp, over medium heat in a large Dutch, that has a lid, about 4 minutes. Add the onions, cinnamon, bay leaves, and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is tender, about 8 minutes.

Increase the heat to medium-high, add the cabbage and cook, stirring, until wilted, about 8 minutes. Add the apple, broth, vinegar, sugar, the remaining salt, and pepper, and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage is tender, about 1 hour. Uncover; bring to a boil, and cook, stirring, until the liquid has reduced to a sauce-like consistency, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve.

## **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, Story, Perez, Esch  
Team Green - Donnor, Campbell, Tregub, Vaganova, Cable, Foat/Langston, Domico  
Team Orange - Van Denend, 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.

## **CREATING A SANE FAMILY (CON'T)**

lives and we think that our children will not notice. But they do! They see what we really care about. And if they see we don't care about mutual support in the way of deification, they most assuredly won't care about it either! We wonder why our children are not the Orthodox Christians we would like them to be, when the answer is perfectly plain: we are not the Orthodox Christians we are called to be, and they are simply following our example. If we don't take the wondrous possibility of deification seriously, no set of rules we try to impose on our children (or ourselves, for that matter) will produce true Orthodox Christians.

Of course, you cannot force another person to holiness. It is always possible that your spouse or child will turn from God for a time or for good. You cannot stop them, if that is their free choice, but if you have not encouraged them and helped them by modeling for them the true life in Christ, you will answer before God for neglecting what is in fact the primary task He gave you in life.....

## **ADULT EDUCATION NIGHTS**

Beginning in October, we will begin a series of monthly-Adult Education Nights. These nights are a time for the adults in our parish to receive more education about our Orthodox faith and provide a forum for healthy discussion with question and answers.

The first meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 24th at 4pm. We will begin the evening with a potluck together at the Chapel at the First Presbyterian Church (where we have Great Vespers). The topic for the first teaching is to-be-determined. Please bring something to share to eat. We need some volunteers for childcare while the teaching is going on. If you're interested, please contact Mat. Mary.

The Adult Education nights will include teachings on the Holy Fathers of the Church with Michael Foat helping teach and lead discussions, bible studies, and tapes of various topics on Church life. 

