

Holy Apostles Newsletter

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



Holy Apostles Orthodox Mission

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From The Holy Fathers

If you see someone exalting himself and is arrogant about his abilities, know that even if he created great signs and resurrected the dead...he is being robbed by an evil spirit without realizing it. Even if he performs miracles — do not believe him because the sign of a Christian is to hide from others any gifts that God has deemed him worthy to receive.

Having the riches of a king, the Christian hides them as though to say: “These are not my riches, someone else put them there.”

Such people have a fervent and unstoppable love for God. The more they succeed and acquire, the more they acknowledge themselves as beggars.

St. Macarius the Great

MY JOURNEY TO ORTHODOXY

by Amelia Langston

I converted to Orthodoxy about 6 years ago. My husband is Orthodox, though when we first married, he hadn't been to church in many years. We were talking about starting a family, and he felt very strongly that children needed to be reared in a church household - both to give them spiritual resources for later life, and to keep them from romanticizing religion. We attended several different churches in the company of family and friends, and my husband would shake his head and say, “No. I'm Orthodox. None of this feels right.” I would sigh, and think “How different can it be?”

I had a deep suspicion of religion, having grown up Unitarian in the South. On the one hand, I had the free and easy 1970s Unitarians in my psyche. On the other hand, I had my Southern Baptist grandmother hissing at me and slapping my unbaptized little hands when the grape juice and bread snack came by during our infrequent visits to her church. (The Unitarians didn't go in for communion. In my age group, we sang “Puff the Magic Dragon” and made Navajo villages out of clay.)

I finally, very reluctantly, agreed to visit an Orthodox Church with my husband. It seemed like a minefield of potential disasters: I could see myself stumbling into a super-sacred area or knocking over a candle stand and burning the whole place down. For the first year, I crept through the narthex and along the left hand wall, and stood well behind everyone so they couldn't see me not making (or badly making) all the mysterious gestures. I was initially struck by how beautiful the Orthodox service was. Everything sung except the homily, beautiful paintings on the walls and carpets on the floors, and absolutely gorgeous music. It took me nearly a year to absorb what they were singing

about and that much of it repeated, so I was largely influenced by the homilies.

The first homily I heard was about what to do if there was someone you wanted to influence, bring into the church, save, help, etc. Fr. George said, “Pray for them.” That sounded doable, and not too scary. And not as intrusive as bludgeoning them with a bible (a la Southern Baptist - I had been told innumerable times growing up I was going to fry because of my Unitarianness.) The second homily was about not judging other people. That sounded really good to me, too. I'm a very suspicious person, and doubt pretty much everything, so I'm not really in a position to say if other folks are doing things right or wrong, and yet I also judge people every day in small ways. It's a good thing to struggle against, and takes a huge weight off my shoulders. All I can do is work at being a better person myself - helpful, kind, thoughtful, decent - I can't make anyone else do anything.

A third homily that affected me was about helping others. There are several ways to translate the Kingdom of God phrase: The Kingdom of God is [within:between:among] you. I prefer between/among, that we create the Kingdom of God by our actions with other people. To love thy neighbor is a valuable lifetime endeavor and challenge.

I finally converted to Orthodoxy because it made sense to me. It gave me a way to become a better person, and to help build community. 🙏

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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.

OKTOBERFEST

Its that time of year again and we are planning for our annual Oktoberfest celebration - German attire encouraged!

When: Sunday, Oct. 4th

Time: 4 pm

Place: TBD (If you are interested in hosting, let Mat.

Mary know)

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. 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

Zucchini, Rice & Mint Frittata - 4 servings

1/4 stick butter
2 med zucchini chopped
4 green onions, sliced
1 cup cooked long-grain rice
2 Tbs. chopped fresh mint
2 Tbs. chopped fresh dill
6 large eggs
2 Tbs. water
3/4 tsp. salt & 1/4 tsp. pepper
3/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
Tomato salsa

Preheat oven to 400. Melt butter in medium nonstick ovenproof skillet over med heat. Add zucchini and onions and saute until soft, about 5 min. Mix in rice & herbs. Whisk eggs, water, salt & pepper in bowl to blend. Pour egg mixture over vegetable-rice mixture in skillet. Sprinkle with cheese. Cook without stirring until bottom begins to set, about 3 min. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until eggs are set, about 12 min. Run rubber spatula around sides of frittata to loosen. Slide frittata onto plate. Cut into wedges. Serve warm or at room temperature with salsa, if desired.

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
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.

COFFEE HOUR DETAILS

Good news! We have permission to use the regular every day dish-ware at the First Presbyterian Church on Sundays. Its good news because it saves us on paper goods and we're much greener in turn (oh aren't we just fabulous Portlanders - I mean Vancouvanders). But of course, with goodness comes struggle...thus we must wash these dishes every Sunday after coffee hour, so teams will be doing a bit more work, but our teams are great so I'm guessing all should be just fine.

Just to clarify - we don't have permission to use the china - just the regular every day stuff (which happens to be white), and we did get permission to use the dishwasher, which is a change to what was previously announced.

Oh and PS - this comes to us at no extra charge to our monthly lease agreement.

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! ❖

