



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN



RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:

St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

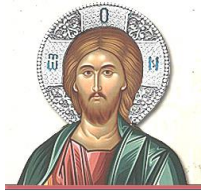
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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February 2023



The last winter month in the Church life

In our Church calendar, every month of the year is special. This month of February contains first of all the Great and of the **Twelve Feast of the Meeting of the Lord (of Presentation)**, the one meaning the long-awaited encounter of the righteous people with the Lord, that finally justified all good that have done and condemned all evil that they have rejected.

In addition, on this month the **preparatory weeks for the Great Lent** usually fall, at least partly, all of them – this year.

The first - **Sunday of the Tax Collector (the Publican) and Pharisee** – reminds us in the form of a parable: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick”(Mt 9:12). Seemingly well, until we apply some tests on ourselves...

The second - **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** – reminds us of the uneasy way home, through, though having been sons, accepting the humble and hard work (of the Great Lent) of slaves – to get back the sonship.

The third - **Sunday of the Final Judgment** – reminds us of the terrible outcome if we are reluctant to seek Christ in our life.

The fourth - **Sunday of Adam's expulsion from Paradise, or Forgiveness Sunday** – remind us of the least we can do, even if we didn't do anything else: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Math. 6, 14).

And there, on the last but one day of this month the Great Lent – our way to the Easter – begins!

So, this is the time to be prepared physically and spiritually, in which may God help and instruct us! Amen.

Baptismal home blessing



Many Christian peoples have their different good traditions, that contribute into the main idea of our Faith, of God Love and the Saviour.

One of the most solemn moments in this respect is the event of the Holy Baptism that we have just celebrated, and, according to our tradition, brought this Grace to our houses in the form of the cleanest matter of the blessed water!

This was finally renewed after some years of involuntary isolation, and, thanks to all who invited us, and the family of Lawrence and Constance, who gave us refreshments after the service, and the guidance of our President David Borys through the country roads.

Again, we were blessed with great driving conditions, with the weather at that time more like a spring one.

But more blessed by the people's smiles and prayers, and pleased greatly by what you have done with God's help!

May those people who participated in the home blessings be a good deposit for the sake of all our people, for them to also receive the same Grace of the Holy Spirit and the mercy of Zacchaeus!

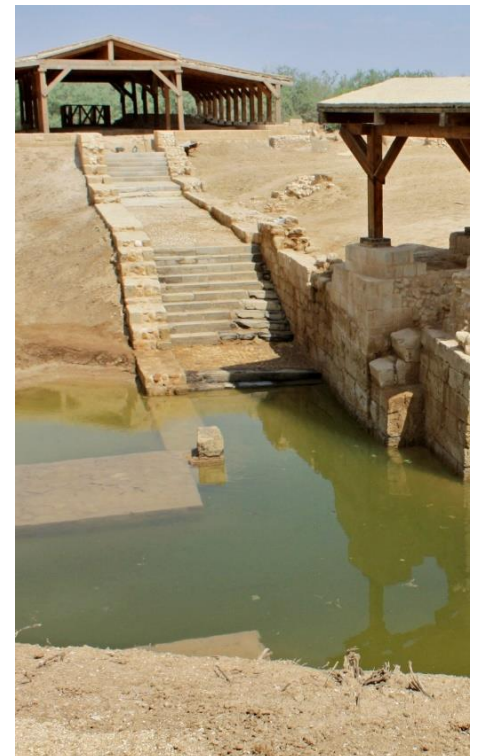
Thank you also so much for all your Christmas cards and gifts! May God vouchsafe us all the wishes we addressed each other during these festive days, and save us!



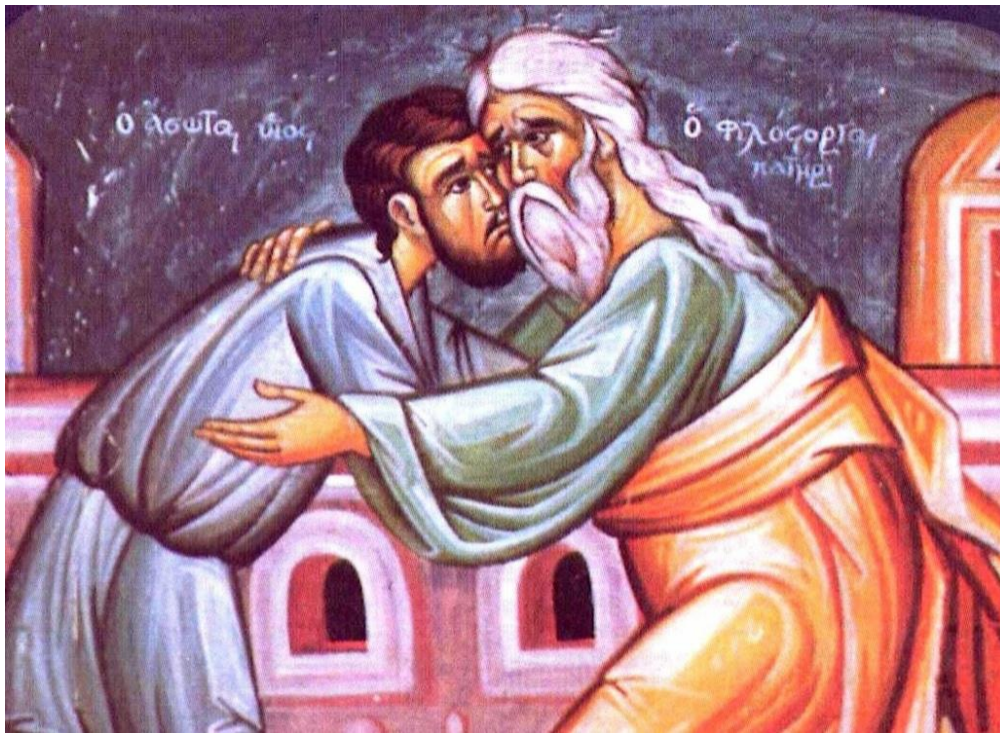
About blessing of houses (from our brochure) and Jesus Christ baptism site at the river Jordan

The Blessing of Homes...

When an Orthodox Christian believer moves into a new home, he dedicates his new home as the abode of a follower of Christ. He asks that God, the source of all goodness and the giver of every perfect gift, to bless his house and all that is within it; he recalls that Jesus Christ, His Son, came to bring salvation to it, even as He brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus; he prays that the Holy Spirit may abide in it, guiding those who dwell in it in the paths of righteousness. On the Feast of Theophany we rededicate our home for its original purpose, just as we must periodically rededicate our life to Christ. We do it especially on this Feast because this is the day on which we remember in the church year the coming of Christ who began his ministry when he descended into Jordan to be baptized by St. John the Forerunner and Baptist. He enters again into our lives reminding us that we must "repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." An Orthodox Christian must dedicate not only himself and his house to the Lord, but his daily work and all his efforts as well. All things are to be done to the glory of God. That is why in the Orthodox Church, not only religious objects, such as icons, crosses, churches and vestments, are blessed, but also homes, fields, animals and all objects which are used in our daily life for the good of man. In this the church expresses its faith that the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action extends over the whole creation.



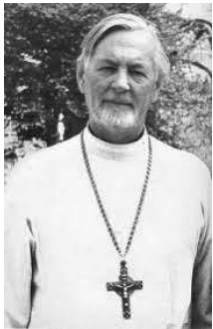
Forgiveness Sunday



In the Orthodox Church, the last Sunday before Great Lent – the day on which, at Vespers, Lent is liturgically announced and inaugurated – is called Forgiveness Sunday.

On the morning of that Sunday, at the Divine Liturgy, we hear the words of Christ: “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses...” (Mark 6:14-15).

Then, after Vespers – after hearing the announcement of Lent in the Great Prokeimenon:



“Turn not away Thy face from Thy child for I am afflicted [I mourn]! Hear me speedily! Draw near unto my soul and deliver it!” [and] after making our entrance into Lenten worship, with its special memories, with the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, with its prostrations – we ask forgiveness from each other, we perform the rite of forgiveness and reconciliation. And as we approach each other with words of reconciliation, the choir intones the Paschal hymns, filling the church with the anticipation of Paschal joy.

What is the meaning of this rite? Why is it that the Church wants us to begin Lenten season with forgiveness and reconciliation? These questions are in order because for too many people, Lent means primarily, and almost exclusively, a change of diet, the compliance with ecclesiastical regulations concerning fasting. They understand fasting as an end in itself, as a “good deed” required by God and carrying in itself its merit and its reward. But, the Church spares no effort in revealing to us that fasting is but a means, one among many, towards a higher goal: the spiritual renewal of man, his return to God, true repentance and, therefore, true reconciliation. The Church spares no effort in warning us against a hypocritical and pharisaic fasting, against the reduction of religion to mere external obligations. As a Lenten hymn says: “In vain do you rejoice in no eating, O soul! For you abstain from food, but from passions you are not purified. If you persevere in sin, you will perform a useless fast.”

Now, forgiveness stands at the very center of Christian faith and of Christian life because Christianity itself is, above all, the religion of forgiveness. God forgives us, and His forgiveness is in Christ, His Son, Whom He sends to us, so that by sharing in His humanity we may share in His love and be truly reconciled with God. Indeed, Christianity has no other content but love. And it is primarily the renewal of that love, a return to it, a growth in it, that we seek in Great Lent, in fasting and prayer, in the entire spirit and the entire effort of that season. Thus, truly forgiveness is both the beginning of, and the proper condition for the Lenten season.

One may ask, however: Why should I perform this rite when I have no “enemies”? Why should I ask forgiveness from people who have done nothing to me, and whom I hardly know? To ask these questions is to misunderstand the Orthodox teaching concerning forgiveness. It is true, that open enmity, personal hatred, real animosity may be absent from our life, though if we experience them, it may be easier for us to repent, for these feelings openly contradict Divine commandments. But, the Church reveals to us that there are much subtler ways of offending Divine Love. These are indifference, selfishness, lack of interest in other people, of any real concern for them—in short, that wall which we usually erect around ourselves, thinking that by being “polite” and “friendly” we fulfill God’s commandments. The rite of forgiveness is so important precisely because it makes us realize – be it only for one minute – that our entire relationship to other men is wrong, makes us experience that encounter of one child of God with another, of one person created by God with another, makes us feel that mutual “recognition” which is so terribly lacking in our cold and dehumanized world.

On that unique evening, listening to the joyful Paschal hymns, we are called to make a spiritual discovery: to taste of another mode of life and relationship with people, of life whose essence is love. We can discover that always and everywhere Christ, the Divine Love Himself, stands in the midst of us, transforming our mutual alienation into brotherhood. As I advance towards the other, as the other comes to me – we begin to realize that it is Christ Who brings us together by His love for both of us.

And because we make this discovery – and because this discovery is that of the Kingdom of God itself: the Kingdom of Peace and Love, of reconciliation with God and, in Him, with all that exists – we hear the hymns of that Feast, which once a year, “opens to us the doors of Paradise.” We know why we shall fast and pray, what we shall seek during the long Lenten pilgrimage. Forgiveness Sunday: the day on which we acquire the power to make our fasting – true fasting; our effort – true effort; our reconciliation with God – true reconciliation.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (+1983),
from Introduction to the booklet, Forgiveness
Sunday Vespers, published 1975-1982

HISTORY AND MEANING OF ORTHODOX FORGIVENESS SUNDAY (IN SHORT)

The custom began on Mount Athos and has extended to other countries throughout time. Its origins can be traced back to an ancient Egyptian tradition in which monks separated in the desert before the start of Lent, just before Easter, to devote themselves entirely to prayer. Due to the several hazards in the desert, the monks requested forgiveness from one another as if it were their final meeting before death.

Forgiveness Sunday is the last day of Cheese-fare Week and the last Sunday before Lent. This day does not have a fixed date because the start of Lent falls on several days in February and March, depending on Easter’s date. It is a period of spiritual cleansing and aids believers in preparing for Lent, which begins the following day.

The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden highlights the Sunday of Forgiveness, an event that demonstrates how far we have fallen into sin and isolated ourselves from God. This Sunday, which marks the beginning of Great Lent and a month of extreme fasting, reminds us of our need for God’s forgiveness and directs our hearts, minds, and spiritual energies toward repentance.

Orthodox Christians seek one another’s forgiveness on this day for all the hardships and transgressions they have created over the years. It is considered that if Lent is reduced to simply abstaining from food without reciprocal forgiveness of crimes, it loses its great value. If someone apologizes to you today, respond by saying, “God forgives, and I forgive you.”



Children's Corner: Drop in with your children and great & grand children!

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:23)

Add Colours To Good Works Picture And Try To Do Likewise!



February 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> St. Euthymius the Great (473) 	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> Apostle Timothy of the Seventy 
<u>5</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at St. Mary's Church at Nisku	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> New Hieromart. Vladimir, of Kiev 	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> St. Ephraim the Syrian (373-379) 	<u>11</u>
<u>12</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara	<u>13</u> St. Arsenius the New, of Paros 	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> The Meeting of the Lord 	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u> St. Nicholas the Confessor 	<u>18</u>
<u>19</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy at St. Mary's, Nisku (<i>Blessing of candles</i>)	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u> Great-martyr Theodore Stratelates (“the General”) 	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> St. Shio of Mgvime , of Georgia 	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> Appearance of the Iveron Icon 
<u>26</u> 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy Forgiveness Sunday	<u>27</u> Great Lent Begins Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<u>28</u> Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ February 27 - March 2 - Great Repentance Canon reading – St. Barbara Cathedral – 6 p.m. ○ March 4. Saturday – 10:00 am – The Annual “Orthodox IX” Parishes meeting will be held at St. Mary Parish Hall, Nisku. ○ March 11. Saturday – 1:00 pm – The Annual St. Mary’s Parish meeting will be held at Parish Hall, Nisku. 			