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**PARISH LIFE: FEBRUARY - MARCH 2013**

On Sunday 17 February, the first Sunday after the commemoration on 6 February of Blessed Xenia of Saint Petersburg, we had a BBQ in honour of our hard-working Ladies' Auxiliary. Prior to this, at the end of the Divine Liturgy, Father James congratulated the ladies and thanked them for all that they do for the building up of our parish. He then intoned Many Years for the Head Sister, Kate Marcotrigiano, for her immediate predecessor Olga Petroff, and for all those who assist them.

During the last week of February we learned with sadness of the repose of Vladimir Vasil'evitch Boikov, a tireless worker in the life of our Diocese for many years. His funeral was served on Friday 1 March at the Intercession of the Holy Virgin parish in Cabramatta, with a great many clergy and laity from across Sydney present. We offer condolences to Sofia Mikhailovna, the newly-reposed Vladimir's widow, and to their whole family.

On Sunday 3 March, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, it was raining heavily and the service was a quiet one. Following the dismissal, a litia was served on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the repose in 1933 of Archbishop Simon of Peking, and for the newly-reposed Vladimir Boikov.

As the faithful came to the cross that day a collection was taken up for Orthodox Action, a charitable organisation that operates in Sydney and Melbourne under the auspices of the Diocese. Father James also announced that the parish bookstore had a number of copies of *Everyday Saints*, the English-language translation of Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov's book, *Несвятые Святые*, and strongly recommended the book to all. For those interested in some thought-provoking spiritual reading during Great Lent, there are still plenty of copies available. The price is \$25.00 for a book of nearly 500 pages.

That afternoon a young woman, Irina Sviridova, was baptised in our church. Present at the service was Irina's husband, Alexander Gerasimov. Irina took as her patron saint the Great-Martyr Irene. May God grant his newly-baptised handmaiden many years!

The following Saturday Alexander and Irina's infant daughter Vera was baptised. Vera's godparents were Olesya Nemtseva and Alexey Raga. Our warmest congratulations to Alexander and Irina and to Olesya and Alexey!

During late February and early March Father James took the opportunity to visit a number of parishioners at home, delivering calendars and blessing those homes that he had not been able to visit after the feast of Theophany.

On 15 March we received our new “Христос Воскресе” lights. Modelled on a set of lights belonging to the Saint Nicholas parish in Fairfield, these LED lights were made for us by Fairlite Plastics in West Gosford. Beautifully shaped as the Slavonic letters “X” and “B”, they will replace the simple wooden set with light bulbs that we have used until now.

On Saturday 16 March there were two memorial services: one to mark the fortieth day of the repose of George Pinczuk, and another to mark the fifth anniversary of the repose of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Laurus. Vladyka’s Laurus’ photograph was placed by the commemoration table that evening and during Divine Liturgy the following day.

On Sunday 17 March, Forgiveness Sunday, Vladyka Laurus was commemorated at the Great Entrance. Later in the service, the newly-baptised Irina and Vera received Holy Communion for the first time. Divine Liturgy was followed, as is customary, by Vespers with the rite of asking forgiveness. During Vespers the gold vestments were replaced with back ones and the singing of the solemn Lenten melodies began. Afterwards many people remained behind to enjoy the pancakes prepared by our hard-working Ladies’ Auxiliary.

During the first week of Great Lent we had services on four evenings: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Great Compline (Великое Повечерие) was served and a different part of the beautiful Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete was read each day. The odes of the Canon were read by Father James alternately in Slavonic and English, and many of those present helped with reading and singing in both languages. These services very much set the tone for Great Lent, and it was pleasing that they were so well-attended.

For those who missed out, Great Compline is served on most Wednesdays during Great Lent, and the Great Canon will be read in full on Wednesday evening of the fifth week in Great Lent – this year, Wednesday 17 April. During this service the edifying life of Saint Mary of Egypt – one of the great models of repentance - will also be read. Our parishioners are encouraged to make time to be at this service, even if only for a part of it.

On the evening of Sunday 24 March we had Vespers with the reading of the first “Passia”, Chapters 26 and 27 of Saint Matthew’s Gospel. This was a much quieter service. As on Forgiveness Sunday, the service moves from festive to Lenten melodies part-way through. The Gospel reading each week recounts the betrayal and Crucifixion of Christ, very much drawing our gaze towards the events commemorated in Passion Week. These services, too, are well worth making time for.

## **DIOCESAN LIFE: LENTEN PASTORAL GATHERING**

On Thursday-Friday 28-29 March, Father James joined other clergy of the Diocese for the customary Lenten Confession and Pastoral Conference. The Rule of Preparation for Holy Communion (the canons to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God and the Guardian Angel, together with an akathist to Christ) and Matins were served at the Croydon church on Thursday evening, with a number of the clergy forming the choir. On Friday morning, 23 priests and 7 deacons from across the Diocese concelebrated the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, with three other priests and a deacon joining them to receive Holy Communion. In all, 36 clergy were present. It being a public holiday that day, the Cathedral choir sang at the service rather than the usual clergy choir, and a great many of the faithful were in church.

After a Lenten meal prepared by the Cathedral Ladies' Auxiliary, the clergy heard presentations from Diocesan Council members on the Diocesan child-safe, child-friendly policy and on the implications for church life of the newly-established Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). The clergy discussed a range of liturgical and pastoral matters. The pastoral matters included preparation for baptism and the necessity of work amongst the youth.

## **CHURCH LIFE: LENTEN EPISTLE OF METROPOLITAN HILARION**

Eminent Brother Archpastors, Honorable Father-Concelebrants, Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

As we approach Great Lent, I hasten to ask forgiveness from you all, as well as your holy prayers for my unworthiness. I earnestly call upon all the children of the Russian Church Abroad to exert all your efforts towards self-contemplation, to examine your lives, to augment your prayers, to attend all the edifying divine services of Great Lent and to read spiritually beneficial books during these days of salvation! Great Lent, with its divine services and spiritually-moving church singing and readings, grants us abundant nourishment for our souls. Let us not fail to take advantage of what the Holy Church offers us during this beneficial period.

The special Cherubic Hymn that we sing during the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts tells us that we should approach the Chalice of Christ with faith and love if we hope to partake of the eternal blessed life. Beloved ones, we are created for eternity. Therefore, we must lift our minds and hearts to heavenly things, especially as we prepare for the Sacraments; we need to leave behind all worldly cares, pouring our souls out before God in praise, gratitude and prayers of repentance.

True fasting consists not only of abstinence from non-lenten foods, but of distancing oneself from impure thoughts, words and deeds. "Those who abstain from food yet behave badly," says St Basil the Great (the author of the Liturgy which will be celebrated on Sundays, on Great Thursday and Great Saturday of this Lent), "are like the devil, who, though he eats not, yet sins perpetually." St Tikhon of Zadonsk, this humble and loving

saint of the Church of our Fatherland, meanwhile, teaches us as follows about fasting: "May your mind fast from worldly thoughts; may your will fast from wicked desires; may your ears fast from filthy songs and the whispers of slanderers; may your tongue fast from slander, condemnation, flattery, lies and all sorts of useless, decadent words; may your hands fast from violence and theft of the property of others; may your feet fast from going towards an evil deed. This is indeed the Christian fast, the sort God requires of us."

Taking all this into account, let us strive to exhibit special effort in prayer, fasting and frequent preparation for the Sacraments, declaring war upon our weaknesses and zealously performing good deeds with the aim of lightening the burden of the cross borne by our neighbors!

I extend heartfelt greetings to all of you with the onset of the "springtime of the soul" and prayerfully wish you blessed success in the podvig of Great Lent, so that on the "feast of feasts," with spiritual joy and piety, with the sense of Paschal elation and new inner strength, you might bow down in adoration to the Lover of mankind, our God Who rose on the third day, the Originator of our faith and salvation! Amen.

With love in the Lord,

+ HILARION,

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York,

First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

**Великопостное послание  
Высокопреосвященнейшего  
И Л А Р И О Н А,**

**митрополита Восточно-Американского и Нью-Йоркского,  
Первоиерарха Русской Зарубежной Церкви.**

**Преосвященные собратья-архипастыри, всечестные отцы-сослужители,  
дорогие о Господе братья и сестры!**

В преддверии Великого поста спешу испросить у всех вас прощения и святых молитв о моем недостоинстве, с добрым сердцем призывая всех чад Русской Зарубежной Церкви в меру своих сил заняться самоуглублением, проверкой своей жизни, сугубой молитвой, посещением назидательных великопостных служб и чтением душеполезных книг в эти дни спасения! Великий пост в своих богослужениях с умирительно-трогательными церковными песнопениями и чтениями дает нам обильную пищу для душ наших, а посему в это благоприятное время непременно воспользуемся тем, что предлагает нам Святая Церковь.

Как поется ныне в особой Херувимской песни Литургии Преждеосвященных Даров, мы должны с верою и любовью приступать к чаше Христовой, если желаем быть причастниками вечно-блаженной жизни. Мы, дорогие мои, созданы для вечности. Поэтому, мы должны возноситься умом и сердцем к небесному; особенно при говении оставлять всякое житейское попечение, изливать перед Богом свою душу в славословии, благодарении и покаянной молитве.

Истинный пост состоит не только в воздержании от скоромной пищи, но и в удалении от нечистых мыслей, слов и дел. Ибо «те, которые воздерживаются от пищи, а ведут себя дурно, говорит святитель Василий Великий, (автор той Литургии, которая будет совершаться в воскресные дни, в Великие Четверг и Субботу настоящего поста), уподобляются диаволу, который, хотя ничего не есть, однакож не перестает грешить». А святитель Тихон Задонский, этот смиренный и любвеобильный святой нашей Отечественной Церкви, поучает так о посте: «да постится ум твой от суетных помышлений; да постится воля твоя от злых желаний; да постятся уши твои от скверных песней и шептаний клеветнических; да постится язык твой от клеветы, осуждения, лести, лжи и всякого праздного гнилого слова; да постятся руки твои от биения и хищения чужого добра; да постятся ноги от хождения на злое дело. Вот это христианский пост, какого Бог наш от нас требует».

Принимая все сие во внимание, будем стараться проявлять особенное усердие к молитве, посту и частому говению, объявив своим слабостям войну и ревностно совершая добрые дела, дабы облегчить ими жизненный крест тех, кто находится рядом!

От души приветствую всех с началом «духовной весны» и молитвенно желаю всем благословенного преуспевания в подвиге Великого поста, чтобы в «праздников праздник» в радости духовной и благоговении, с чувством пасхального ликования и новыми внутренними силами поклониться тридневно Восставшему Человеколюбцу Богу, Начальнику нашей веры и спасения! Аминь.

С любовью о Господе,

+ ИЛАРИОН,

Митрополит Восточно-Американский и Нью-Йоркский,  
Первоиерарх Русской Зарубежной Церкви.

## **PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS**

Our Parish Council met on Tuesday 12 March. Matters discussed included applications from parish members for renewal of membership; new guidelines to help people serving in church at the candle-desk and taking up collections; parish and Ladies' Auxiliary finances; risk assessment; and a proposal to begin collecting funds for the purchase of a church house. The Parish Council will meet next on Tuesday 9 April.

## **PARISH AND DIOCESAN LIFE: CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS**

As mentioned above, we took up a collection for Orthodox Action on Sunday 3 March, raising a total of \$370.00. This money, together with funds collected throughout the Diocese, assists Orthodox Action in its work to help needy persons, destitute children and orphanages in Russia and other countries of the former USSR.

On Sunday 31 March we will take up a collection for Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York. Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary is the main seminary of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. This collection provides financial assistance to

students, including tuition, room and board. Please give generously! More information about the monastery and the seminary can be found at [www.jordanville.org.au](http://www.jordanville.org.au) and [www.hts.edu](http://www.hts.edu) respectively.

Readers will recall that the beneficiary of our money-box collection during the Nativity Fast was the Sretensky Monastery's project for the construction of a church "on the blood" in the Lubyanka Square in Moscow, a place in which many Orthodox Christians gave up their lives for the sake of their faith. We received all the money boxes back late in February and, upon counting the proceeds, found that \$1124.70 had been raised. This is the largest amount collected for any cause in one of our regular parish collections. The funds have since been transferred to the Sretensky Monastery to assist in this important work.

Our money-box collection during Great Lent is for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. Customarily taken up on Palm Sunday, our Parish Council thought it best to commit our "moneybox" collection to this cause during Great Lent this year, with a plate collection in church for the same purpose on Lazarus Saturday, 27 April. There are still a number of moneyboxes in church available for people to take home. More information about the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem can be obtained from <http://jerusalem-mission.org/>.

### **PARISH LIFE: THE MONTH AHEAD**

We will have services for the Annunciation of the Mother of God and Veneration of the Holy Cross on the weekend of 6-7 April. The Service of General Anointing (Soborovanie) will take place on Sunday 21 April at 5.00pm.

On Thursday 25 April, the Anzac Day public holiday, we will have the usual pre-Easter general clean up from 8.00am. All are encouraged to attend!

There will be services for Lazarus Saturday on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 April. During Holy Week, Matins will be served each evening from Sunday 28 April (Palm Sunday) to Wednesday 1 May, with Divine Liturgy held at 9.00am on Holy Thursday. Vespers with the bringing out of the Shroud of Christ will be held at 3.00pm on Friday 3 May. On Great Saturday, the Reading of the Acts of the Holy Apostles will start at 9.00pm, followed by Midnight Office at 11.20pm and Paschal Matins and Divine Liturgy. As usual, a number of us will share a festive meal at church immediately after the Paschal service. Paschal Vespers will also be served at 11.00am on Easter Sunday.

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE: CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION DURING GREAT LENT**

Parishioners wishing to confess are able to come to evening services on Saturdays, Sundays or Wednesdays. During Great Lent, confessions will only be heard before Divine Liturgy if there is no alternative. All are encouraged to prepare for Holy Communion on the Great Feast of the Annunciation-Holy Cross on Sunday 7 April. Those who confess on or after 20 April are welcome to receive Holy Communion at Gosford on Sunday 21 April,

Lazarus Saturday, Holy Thursday, and Pascha, in addition to any Wallsend services they attend.

### **CHURCH LIFE: SPECIAL EVENTS DURING 2013**

This year, there are three days on the church calendar on which Father James has suggested that there be special activities involving both our parish and Saint Nicholas' in Wallsend:

- The Day of Youth of the Russian Church Abroad – Sunday 30 June, a Gosford Sunday;
- The 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' – Sunday 28 July, a Wallsend Sunday; and
- The commemoration of Saints Peter and Fevronia, a day of celebration of love and faithfulness in marriage – Sunday 15 September, a Gosford Sunday.

These days give us opportunities to focus on matters of importance: our children and young people, our common Russian Orthodox inheritance, and love and faithfulness within our marriages.

The Day of Youth of the Russian Church Abroad was established in 2008 by the Council of Bishops, when it was decided that the Sunday of All Saints – the first Sunday after Pentecost - would be the occasion of a celebration aimed at all three basic socio-cultural groups of the youth of our Holy Church: young people born in Russia, those born abroad, and those who have turned to Orthodoxy from the local populations where the Russian Church Abroad exists. Sadly, very few activities have been organised over the years to give effect to the Council's decision. This year, it would be good if we could plan events that both encourage and showcase the involvement of children and young people from diverse backgrounds in the life of our Church.

Saint Vladimir, equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of Russia, is commemorated each year on 28 July. His feast-day falls on a Sunday this year, coincidentally 1025 years since the Baptism of Rus' in 988. Father James has suggested that Divine Liturgy be served at Speers Point on Lake Macquarie that day, followed by a lakeside blessing of water, a festive BBQ or picnic lunch, and activities such as a play about the Baptism of Rus' and Russian games and dancing.

Saints Peter and Fevronia of Murom were a married couple who have become for the Russian Orthodox Church the model of love and faithfulness in married life. Late in 2012, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church established a further day for their commemoration in addition to 8 July (25 June O.S.): the Sunday before 19 September (September 6 O.S.) in remembrance of the transfer of their holy relics in 1992. On Sunday 15 September a moleben for all married and engaged couples is planned. A play for the children based on the lives of Saints Peter and Fevronia has also been suggested.

Anyone interested in being involved in the organisation of any of these activities should speak with Father James. The idea at this stage is to form three small committees with members from both parishes to plan and coordinate activities on each of these three days.

## PARISH LIFE: CALENDARS, CONTACT DETAILS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Late in 2012 the Parish Council agreed to order a number of parish wall calendars for distribution to each home in the parish. These calendars, together with the smaller magnetic calendars showing Sunday service-days, have been warmly received. Wall calendars will certainly be purchased by the parish again next year, with the 2014 calendars to commemorate ten years of services at West Gosford.

Unfortunately, their distribution was quite complex, in part because they did not become available until after Orthodox Christmas. This was added to by the fact that we have no postal address and – as we learned – out-of-date contact details for many friends of the parish.

In view of this, we have reviewed our parish directory and our distribution policy. From April 2013 onwards, information will only be posted or emailed to those with whom we have had contact in the last two years and for whom we have confirmed up-to-date contact details. Others are encouraged to make use of the information about parish life available on our website or on the parish Facebook page.

If any of our parishioners have not yet received a calendar, there are still some left. Please ask at the candle desk or see Father James.

### THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

**The sick:** Nun Euphrosyne; Leonid; and our parishioners Vladimir, Michael, Tatiana, Tatiana, and Boris.  
**Studying and working abroad:** Michael; Deacon Martin, Tatiana, Xenia, Alexander and Sebastian.  
**Departed:** Patriarch Alexis, Patriarch Varnava, Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, and former parishioners and benefactors Tatiana (Venttsel), Irene (Claydon), Victor (Manjetny), Vladimir (Dmitrieff), George (Fomin), Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Galina (Petroff), Alexander (Dikan), Elena (Yakupova), and Lydia (Ustimko).



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