



THE PARISH VINE



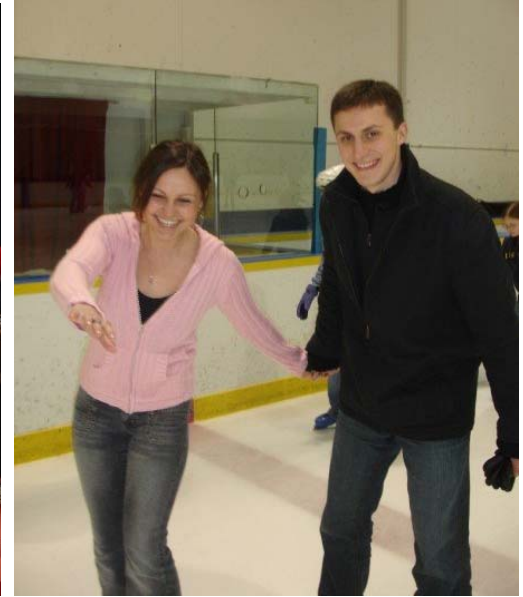
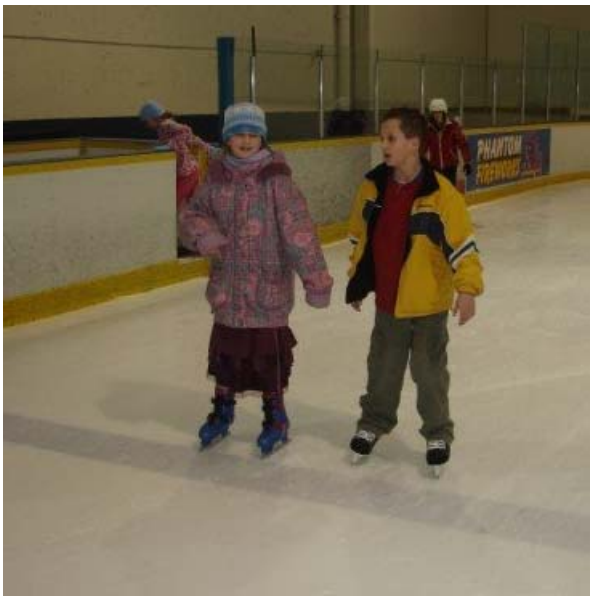
ПРИХОДСКАЯ ЛОЗА

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. John 15

**The Youth Newsletter of St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church
Молодёжный Листок Прихода Св. Владимира
Ann Arbor, MI**

February 2007

With the support of our whole parish, the youth group spent a pleasant evening at the Ann Arbor Ice Cube on Forgiveness Sunday. The atmosphere was very nice, as everyone engaged in interaction with one another. It was wonderful to see all the younger kids join us, for they will be the abundant addition to the group in several years to come. Overall, it was a successful event and we missed all of you who weren't able to join us that evening!



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On February 10th, the youth group volunteered for Hearts for the Arts, which is a joint benefit for the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center and the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra. Youth Group raised over \$300 at this event. Thank you to everyone who came out to help!

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JORDANVILLE: February 20, 2007

**GREAT LENTEN EPISTLE OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN LAURUS, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA**

Reverend Fathers, Dear in the Lord Brothers, Sisters and Children:

I send my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the arrival of the salvific period of Great Lent, the time designated for our inner self-examination. The Holy Church summons us towards this, that we purify ourselves with augmented prayers and fasting, that we illumine ourselves with the reading of spiritually-beneficial books and approach our God and Creator, our Heavenly Father and Closest Friend, Who invites us into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Love, Peace, Mercy and Light. Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). And also: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). So, dear in the Lord fathers, brothers, sisters and children, in order that our prayers, labors of fasting and repentance be pleasing to God and that they gain for us the absolution of sins and the renewal of our inner strength, we must be at peace with our neighbor.

In fact, how could our prayers, fasting and repentance be a pure sacrifice before God if they emerge from hearts that are filled with hatred against others? We must read the Lord's Prayer often: "Our Father... forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors." By keeping enmity within our hearts, how dare we utter these words of the Lord's Prayer? Would not our prayer then remain a hollow sound? Would we not be lying brazenly before God? We often hear the exclamation during divine services: "In peace let us pray to the Lord; Peace be unto to all." These words demand of us that we approach prayer having first made peace with everyone, so that we stand before God without anger or malice. Or, when the Holy Church prepares us for the worthy participation in the Divine Liturgy, she also reminds us of reconciliation and love as necessities for our fruitful communion with God and each other in the Mystery of Communion. "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." In the ancient Church, in witness to this mutual love, Christians who prayed during Divine Liturgy kissed one another; now this is performed only by the priests within the altar, while all others, as they hear this exclamation, must establish love and peace for all within their souls. How dare we, fathers, brothers and sisters, perform or pray during Divine Liturgy with hostility in our hearts, and approach Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior, Who, as He was crucified, prayed for His enemies? We will truly enter into communion with God only when we expel from our hearts wrath and wickedness.

St Anastasius of Sinai recounted the story of one monk who led his life in sloth and disregard for monastic rules, who during his final moments felt special spiritual joy. The other monks were amazed at this and asked him what brings him such joy. The dying monk responded thusly: "I watched as the holy angels shredded the lists of my sins, for though I lived carelessly and slothfully, I never condemned anyone, never remembered the evils of others."

And so, reverend fathers, brothers, sisters and children, as we remember the testament of our Savior, the call of the Holy Church, and as we immerse ourselves in the spiritually-beneficent Lenten time by taking the example of the Holy Fathers, let us strive especially to prevent enmity, hatred and anger amongst ourselves, and instead let peace, love, trust and other Christian virtues eternally abide among us. Let us try in our earthly lives fulfill in deed fulfill the instructions of Apostle Paul to the Christians: "let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26), "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18), "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21), and may the Lord help us in these holy days.

Once again I greet you all with the Great Lent and prayerfully wish every one of you reconciliation with God in His image, which is reflected in our neighbors. Let the purified heart of each one of us become the Life-Bearing Tabernacle from which the Resurrected Lord will shine forth. Let everyone see in our eyes and in our lives this Triumph of Christ over evil, over sin and over everything horrible in this world. Greeting the Pascha of Christ in this way will be the finest way to preach the truth of Orthodoxy. In this bright state, I hope, we shall approach the canonical actions which will serve to the reestablishment this year of peace and unity within the Local Russian Orthodox Church.

May this be within the souls of each one of us. Amen.

With love in the Lord, I beseech your prayers,

+ *Metropolitan Laurus,*
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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*Spiritual Backpack*

Fr. Michael Carney

*Dear folks,*

*As Lent begins, I ask forgiveness from all of you. Through His grace, may our Lord have mercy on us all!*

*~Fr. Michael~*



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Almsgiving:

- ❖ *Do I give to the poor? The ancient Romans said of the Christians: "They're so generous that they take care of our poor as well as of their own." Could that be said of me?*
- ❖ *Do I support the Church financially?*
- ❖ *What do I do with the money I save from eating less, and less expensive, food during Lent?*
- ❖ *St. Basil says: "The extra pair of shoes picking up dust in your closet belongs to the poor." Do I have clothes, glasses, books, belongings that I can and should part with?*
- ❖ *Alms can be given in more than one "currency". What can I give instead of money, or in addition to it? Physical help to the elderly and infirm, tutoring to children or the illiterate? Five minutes of patient listening to the lonely old lady at the grocery store? An extra room in the house to a needy person?*



**"The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."**

**St. Paul to the Romans, 14:17**

**"All mortal life is but one day, so it is said, to those who labour with love. There are forty days in the Fast:**

**let us keep them all with joy."**

**The Lenten Triodion**



The Lenten Prayer  
of St. Ephrem the Syrian

(prayed on weekdays of Lent)

O Lord and Master of my life,  
take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust for power, and idle talk.  
(prostration)

But grant rather the spirit  
of chastity, humility, patience  
and love to Thy servant.  
(prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King,  
grant me to see my own sins  
and not to judge my brother,  
for blessed art Thou  
unto the ages of ages. Amen.  
(prostration)

## Supplies for the Spiritual Backpack

### a Lenten checklist

If the whole of Christian life is a journey, then the Lenten season is a deliberate hike into the wilderness. The wise traveler pre-paring to cross the desert looks over his provisions carefully. He can take only what is really necessary, what will repay the effort of carrying it. He will ask advice from those with experience. He will always keep his destination in mind.

Our Lenten efforts are not an aimless or self-directed walk. Rather, the Lent of the Orthodox is a determined and guided journey to meet Christ. Each Christian struggles with his own passions -seemingly, alone. But in reality, he is part of the whole Church, being led by the Spirit to be tempted in the desert and there to meet the power of its Risen Saviour.

All of our Lenten observance is a means to make the most of this encounter. Its aim is to

make us receptive enough to receive Grace from God, to move us out of the prison of selfishness and idolatry we have made for ourselves. St. Theophan the Recluse asks: "If we move out of ourselves, whom do we encounter?" He answers quickly: "God - and our neighbor."

There are three main aspects of our efforts, which when used with care can help us travel lightly on our journey. They are: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. They are not ends in themselves, nor do we "earn our salvation" through them. Rather, they are tools Christ has given us to find and cling to the salvation that only He offers. Twenty centuries' worth of Christian spiritual experience bears witness to their power to do just that.



## Prayer and spiritual life:

- ❖ *Am I having a feud with someone? Am I holding a grudge? Am I angry with someone?*
- ❖ *Do I feel (yet) that I really need to pray? Or am I self-satisfied?*
- ❖ *What things in my life stand in the way of prayer? (A chaotic lifestyle, disordered house, overbooked schedule, an atmosphere of tension in the house, overtiredness, etc...)*
- ❖ *Do I have a prayer book and do I use it? Do I have icons in my home, and do they rest in a place of honor?*
- ❖ *Do I have a prayer rule? Do I keep it? Does it need adjustment? Who am I accountable to about it?*
- ❖ *Do I pray with my spouse/family?*
- ❖ *Do I cleanse my mind and heart by reading the Scriptures? What else am I reading/watching for the good of my soul?*
- ❖ *What additional services will I plan to come to in Lent? Nobody can come to everything, but everyone can come to something.*
- ❖ *How can I prepare better for Holy Confession and Holy Communion? Remember that Lent is a great time for a family to fast, confess and commune together.*



Palms: in Catacomb art, a symbol of the martyrs' victory over the passions

## Fasting:

- ❖ *Do I want to love God and my neighbor more, and do I want to use fasting as a tool to do this? Without this fundamental desire, fasting will only make me worse, as proud and judgmental as the devil himself (who never eats anything at all!).*
- ❖ *Am I fasting? Do I know the fasting discipline of the Church and use it? Do I try to understand the purpose of fasting? Do I use it as a tool?*
- ❖ *Do I fast from all food and drink from midnight on days I receive Holy Communion? Do I fast from animal products (meat, milk, eggs, cheese) on Wednesdays, Fridays and during fasting periods? Do I abstain from marital relations (with the consent of my spouse) on fasting days?*
- ❖ *If health, safety or other concerns keep me from fasting strictly, do I discipline myself in other ways? (Note that we should ordinarily NOT make up our own rules - one of the aims of fasting is to train and re-orient our will, not to indulge it. Accountability, especially to one's confessor, can keep us honest here.)*
- ❖ *Are there other entertainments and distractions I should fast from? Do I always have the T.V. or radio blaring? Do I "gorge myself" on the Ipod or the internet? (One music-loving family used to lock the piano during Lent.)*
- ❖ *Do I teach my children about fasting? Do I set a good example?*
- ❖ *What concrete preparations do I need to make to help me to fast? (Buying a Lenten cookbook, swapping recipes, getting tempting foods out of the refrigerator, etc.)*

Sin.

*Sin, or Evil, is a violation of God's law. Transgression, or sin, is violating the will of God. How did people begin to sin, and who was the first to violate the will of God?*

*Before the creation of the visible world and man, God created **angels**. Angels are bodiless **spirits**, invisible and immortal. All the angels were created good and God gave them complete freedom to love God or not, and to live with God or without God.*

*One of the most radiant and powerful angels did not wish to love God, to depend on Him, and fulfill the will of God, but desired to become like God Himself, to live independently. This angel ceased to obey God and began to resist God in everything. Thus he became the enemy of God, and many other angels went with him.*

*For such a rebellion against God these angels were all deprived of the light and blessedness that had been given to them, and they became evil, dark spirits.*

*All these dark, evil spirits are now called **demons or devils**. The main devil who was once the most radiant of the angels is called Satan, the enemy of God.*

*The Devil inspires people not to obey God, but to sin. The Devil deceives. By cleverness and deceit he taught the first people created by God, Adam and Eve, to violate the will of God.*

*All people come from Adam and Eve, who first fell into sin, and therefore we are born with an inclination to sin. Being constantly committed from generation to generation, sin has taken power over all men and has submitted everyone to itself. All men — to a greater or lesser degree — are sinners.*

*It is sin that constantly separates man from God and leads to suffering, illness, and death — temporal and eternal. It is for this reason that mankind began to suffer and die. Men alone, by their own efforts, could not overcome the evil that had spread throughout the world, or destroy death. God in His compassion gave help to men, sending to earth His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

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Next Youth Group Meeting Will Be Held On: March 25th, 2007
Topic: Monasticism

"The Parish Vine"

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Do you like to help others?
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Do you like to meet new people?
Join the Youth Group!

St. Herman Youth Group is for ALL St. Vladimir's Young People!
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