



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

June 2007

Over Memorial Day weekend, our youth group took a pleasant trip to a small church in Fort Wayne, Indiana for a youth retreat that was encouraged by Bishop Peter of Cleveland, Administrator of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America. Even though, we had a small turn out of youth, the conference was still successful.



We were blessed to have Bishop Peter with us, along with Fr. Daniel Marshall, Fr. Iliia Marzev, Fr. Michael Carney,

Protodeacon Vadim Gan, and our very own Father Gregory. It was nice as there were not so many of us youth, we were spoiled with the attention of the priests – it was good to talk to each one of them throughout the two days.

The first evening we had a delightful barbeque, after which we had a Matins service. The next day we attended Divine Liturgy, following a meal that was put together by everyone, including the parishioners of the church and the youth groups. After we were done eating, Father Daniel Marshall gave us an interesting lecture entitled “ ‘What, me a missionary?’ – St. Innocent’s Advice on Spreading the Word of God.” Right below is the handout he gave us from an excerpt, “Instructions to a Priest Assigned to Convert Non-Orthodox and to Guide Those Converted into the Christian Faith:”

Preparation for preaching the Faith

1) The first and true preparation for this is prayer, which alone can tap the source of higher instruction and bring down a blessing upon every good undertaking and every good work. Therefore always, and particularly before any conversation with the unenlightened whom you wish to illumine with the Word of Truth, turn to God with heartfelt prayer.





2) Always have a meek and humble state of soul and do not arrogantly promise yourself extraordinary or certain success in your labors. Such promises come from pride and grace is not given to the proud.

3) Every time, when you set to work, establish in yourself both peace of mind and complete presence of mind, otherwise, you cannot express even that which you know with certainty and in its essence.

4) Do not begin your work without preliminary reflection and do not carry it out with absent-mindedness or negligence, for your work is the Lord's and cursed is he who performs it carelessly.

5) Always remember that if a preacher does not have in himself both love to his occupation and for those to whom he is preaching, then even the very best and most eloquent exposition of doctrine can be bereft of benefit; for only love creates, and therefore, strive to have within yourself the spirit of holy love.

This excerpt was translated by Father Daniel Marshall, who wrote his Senior Thesis at Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, NY on St. Innocent. For those who were not able to join us at the retreat, this is a good thing to read because it's important for us to know, as we are approached by non-Orthodox people everyday.

After Fr. Daniel's presentation the youth had open discussion with Bishop Peter, where he told us about the Reconciliation of the Church Abroad and the Church in Russia. Bishop Peter left right after the discussion, as we continued to talk with the other priests about the struggles we experience living in the real world as Orthodox youth. The retreat ended with a relaxing pizza dinner at the park.



Overall, it was a memorable experience, as the youth shed a stream of light and liveliness to the Holy Trinity church. The church has not had a group like ours visiting or attending in about 27 years, so they were very glad to have us join them for the weekend.

The parishioners there consist mainly of senior citizens; therefore, Bishop Peter thought it was important for the youth to leave a mark on the parish, with a hope of reviving it altogether in the future. God willing and with prayers, this church will add a new generation of parishioners.

Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America Russian Orthodox Church

First Annual Diocese-Wide Bell Ringing Competition



June 30, 2007

8:00a.m. Divine Liturgy (St. John of Shanghai & San Francisco)

10:00a.m. Bell Ringing Clinic/Practice/Lunch

6:00p.m. Vigil/Dinner

July 1, 2007:

10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy/Lunch

1:00 p.m. Diocesan Bell Ringing Competition

Registration by June 1: \$50 per 3-person team
Registration after June 1: \$75 per 3-person team
All Ages!

*St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church
Ann Arbor, MI*

www.stvladimiraami.org

More Information + Registration Forms:

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*Sponsored by the Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America Youth Committee
with the Blessing of His Grace, Bishop Peter of Cleveland*

Icons

In the church on the iconostasis, along the walls, and at home in the corners are the **holy icons**, before which we say our prayers.

An **icon** or **image** is what we call the representation of God Himself, the Mother of God, the angels, or the saints. This representation is consecrated with Holy Water and prayer. Through this blessing the Grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted to the icon, and we reverence the icon as being holy. There are icons, through which the Grace of God that abides in them is revealed even by miracles, for instance in the healing of the sick.

The Saviour Himself gave us His portrait. Moved to compassion, He wiped His sacred face with a towel and miraculously depicted His face on this towel for the sick prince Abgar. When the sick prince prayed before this icon of the Saviour, that had not been made with hands, he was healed of his illness.

When praying before an icon, we must remember that the icon is not God Himself or a saint of God, but only the depiction of God or His saint. Therefore, we must not pray to the icon, but to God or the saint who is depicted on it.

The holy icon is a sacred book. In a sacred book we reverently read the words of God, and on a holy icon we reverently behold the holy faces which, like the Word of God, lift up our mind to God and His saints, and inflame our heart with love for our Creator and Saviour.

How God is Portrayed in the Holy Icons.

God is an invisible Spirit. However, He appeared to holy men in a visible image. Therefore, we depict God in the icons in the form in which He appeared.

We depict the **Most-holy Trinity** in the form of three angels sitting at a table. This is because the Lord once appeared to Abraham in the form of three angels. In order to represent more clearly the spirituality of the angels that appeared to Abraham, we represent them with wings.

God the Son is represented in the form in which he appeared when he came down from heaven for our salvation and became man: an infant in the arms of the Mother of God, teaching the people and working miracles, transfigured, suffering on the Cross, lying in the tomb, resurrecting and ascending.

God the Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a dove, as He revealed Himself at the time of the Baptism of the Saviour in the Jordan by John the Baptist; and in the form of tongues of fire, as He descended visibly on the holy Apostles on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



Others Besides God Who Are Depicted in the Holy Icons.

Besides God we depict in the holy icons **the Mother of God, the holy angels and holy people.**

We should pray to them not as to God, but as being close to God, as having pleased Him by their holy life. Out of love for us they pray for us before God, and we should ask for their help and intercession because the Lord for their sake will more speedily hear our sinful prayers.

It is worthy of note that the first icons of the Mother of God painted by the disciple of the Lord, St. Luke, have been preserved down to our time. There is a tradition that when the Mother of God saw Her portrait, she said, "The Grace of My Son will dwell with this icon." We pray to the Mother of God because She is closest of all to God, and at the same time, She is also close to us. Because of Her motherly love and Her prayers God forgives us many things and helps us in many ways. She is a great and compassionate intercessor for all of us!



The Holy Angels.

In the beginning when neither the world nor men existed yet, God created the **holy angels.**

Angels are bodiless spirits, therefore invisible and immortal. The Lord God granted to them loftier powers and abilities than to mankind. Their mind is more perfect than ours. They always fulfill the will of God. They are without sin, and now they are so filled with the Grace of God in doing good, that they do not desire in any way to sin.

Many times the angels have appeared in visible form, taking on a physical appearance, when God sent them to people to relate or to announce His will. The word "**angel**" means "**messenger.**"

Every Christian is granted by God at his Baptism a **Guardian Angel** who invisibly protects him during all his earthly life from misfortunes and dangers; he warns against sin, guards us at the terrible hour of death, and does not depart after death.

The angels are depicted in icons in the form of handsome youths, as a sign of their spiritual beauty. Their wings show that they speedily fulfill the will of God.



About the Saints.

On the icons also we represent **holy people** or **the saints of God.** We call them by this name because when they lived on earth, they pleased God by their righteous life. And now, dwelling in Heaven with God, they pray for us to God and help us who live on earth.

The saints have different titles: **prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, holy monks, unmercenaries, blessed ones, and the righteous.**

The prophets are the saints of God who, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, foretold the future, primarily about the Saviour. They lived before the coming of the Saviour.

The **apostles** were the closest disciples of Jesus Christ, whom He sent during His earthly life to preach. After the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them, they preached the Christian faith in all lands. At first there were twelve of them, and later, seventy more.

Two of the apostles, **Peter and Paul**, are called **leaders of the apostles**, because they labored in preaching the faith of Christ more than the others. Four of the apostles, **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the Theologian**, who wrote the Gospels, are called Evangelists.

Saints who spread the Christian faith in various places like the apostles, are called **Equal-to-the-Apostles**, as for example, **Mary Magdalene**, the first woman-martyr **Thecla**, the pious monarchs **Constantine** and **Helen**, the pious Russian prince Vladimir, Saint Nina, the Enlightener of Georgia, and others.

The martyrs are those Christians who accepted terrible tortures and even death for their faith in Jesus Christ. If they died in peace, that is, not as an immediate result of their sufferings for Christ, then we call them **confessors**.

The first to suffer for the Holy Faith after especially terrible sufferings for faith in Christ were **Archdeacon Stephen** and **St. Thecla**, and therefore they are called the **first martyrs**.

Those who died for the Holy Faith after especially cruel tortures, such as not all the martyrs were subjected to, are called **great martyrs**, as for example, holy **Great Martyr George**, and the holy **Great Martyrs Barbara** and **Catherine**.

The confessors on whose faces the persecutors branded or tattooed blasphemous words are called **branded**.

Hierarchs are bishops and prelates who pleased God by a righteous life, such as **St. Nicholas** the Wonderworker, **St. Alexis**, Metropolitan of Moscow, and others.

Hierarchs and priests who suffered persecution for Christ are called **hieromartyrs**.

The hierarchs **Basil the Great**, **Gregory the Theologian**, and **John Chrysostom** are called **ecumenical teachers**, teachers of the entire Christian Church.

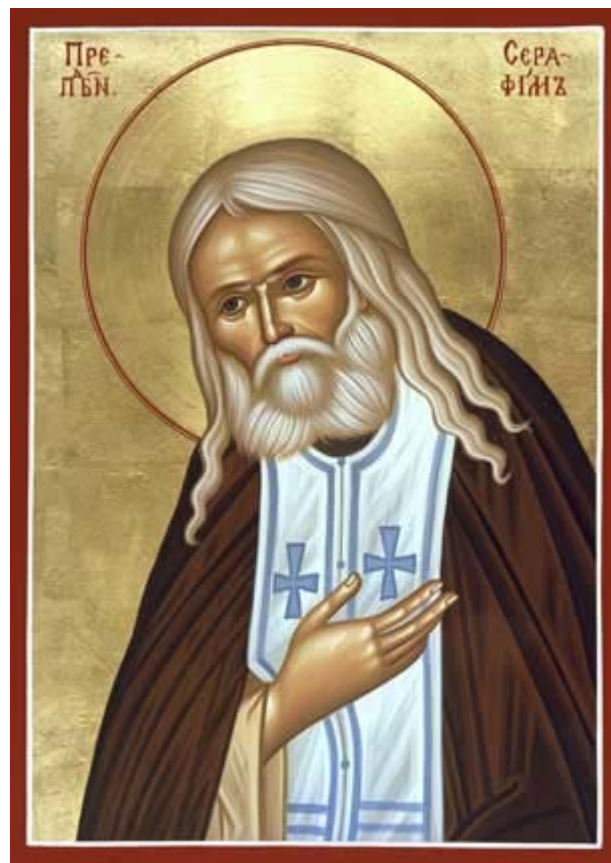
Holy monks and nuns are righteous people who abandoned the life of the world in society and pleased God by preserving their virginity (not entering into marriage), by fasting and prayer, and dwelling in the wilderness or in monasteries. Some examples are **Sergius of Radonezh**, **Seraphim of Sarov**, **St. Anastasia**, and others.

Holy monks that endured suffering for Christ are called **Monk Martyrs**.

Unmercenaries are saints who served their neighbors with the unmercenary healing of illnesses; that is, without payment they healed illnesses, both physical and spiritual. They include **Cosmas** and **Damian**, the **Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon**, and others.

The **Righteous** led a righteous life that was pleasing to God, living as we do in the world, with a family, as for example, **Joachim** and **Anna** and others.

The first righteous people on the earth were the patriarchs of the human race, who are called **forefathers**. They include **Adam**, **Noah** and **Abraham**.



About Haloes on the Icons.

Around the heads of the Saviour, the Mother of God and the holy saints of God, in the icons and pictures of them there is depicted a radiance or a circle of light which is called a **halo**.

In the halo of the Saviour there are three letters: **Ο ΩΗ**, which translated from Greek into English mean "**Being,**" or "**He Who Is,**" for God alone always exists.

Over the head of the Mother of God are placed the letters: **ΜΡ ΘΥ**. These are the first and last letters of the Greek words which mean "Mary, Mother of God."



A halo is the depiction of the shining of light and glory of God which transfigure a man who is united with God.

This invisible shining of the light of God in the saints sometimes becomes visible for people around them.

Thus, for example, the holy Prophet Moses had to hide his face with a veil so that people would not be blinded by the light that proceeded from his face.

Also the face of St. Seraphim of Sarov shone like the sun during his talk with Nicholas Motovilov about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Motovilov himself wrote that it was not possible for him to look at the face of St. Seraphim.

Thus the Lord glorified His holy saints, who shine with the light of His glory even here on earth.

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*"If God be for us, who can be against us?"  
St. John Chrysostom*

### **"The Parish Vine"**

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about your Orthodox Faith?

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**Join the Youth Group!**

**Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America Youth is a group for Orthodox young adults, which helps us stay united and in contact across the Midwest. Please join if you would like to know more about the Orthodox faith as well as be up to date on events/activities going on in our diocese.**

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