



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

October 2007

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Announcement:

Vasiliki Stamoulis is one of our parishioners that can't easily get out of her house due to her medical condition. Father Gregory is starting to do an akathist for her once every month at her home and it would be nice if the youth group came along and gave her some company for a couple of hours. The akathist takes about one hour, so we would stay half hour to an hour and just socialize with her afterwards. We are thinking to do it on the first Monday of every month at 7 PM.

If you are interested and have the time to do this, please contact us and we will be happy to give you the address of her place and answer any questions that you may have. This is a great opportunity to help one of our parishioners!

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Please Save The Date!

The next Youth Retreat will be held in Goshen, IN - Thanksgiving Weekend.

Just 2.5 hours from Ann Arbor!

November 23-25, 2007

The topic will be:

"Orthodox Christian Marriage for the Newly Married or the Future Married".



Bishop Peter will join us and we look to have a great lineup of speakers, including a priest's wife who has been married for at least 30 years.

Don't miss it! It'll be a great experience!

Cost is **only** \$30 per person including lectures, lodging, sightseeing and all meals!
Make checks payable to **Holy Virgin Protection Orthodox Church**



Conference Schedule:

Friday, Nov. 23:

4-9 p.m. Registration, Moleben, Dinner, and Fellowship in Parish Hall at 61355 County Road 21 (Indiana Ave.), Goshen, IN 46528

Saturday, Nov. 24:

7-8 a.m. Breakfast at Hotel

8:30-12:30 Tour of Amish Acres Historic Farm and Lunch

1-4 p.m. Conference and roundtable discussion including lectures by Rev. Fr. John Moses, All Saints of North America Church, Middlebrook, VA
Protonica Mira Kostur, St. Elijah Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, Merrillville, IN

5-6 p.m. Dinner in Parish Hall

7 p.m. Vigil served by His Grace, Bishop Peter

Sunday, Nov. 25:

9 a.m. Meeting of His Grace, Bishop Peter followed by Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Festal Meal

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The Conference is Open to Orthodox Young Adults (18 and older)

To register please contact us:

[sthermanyouthgroupcoordinators@yahoo.com](mailto:sthermanyouthgroupcoordinators@yahoo.com)

# The Law of God.

By Seraphim Slobodskoy.

## The Sacred History of the Old Testament.

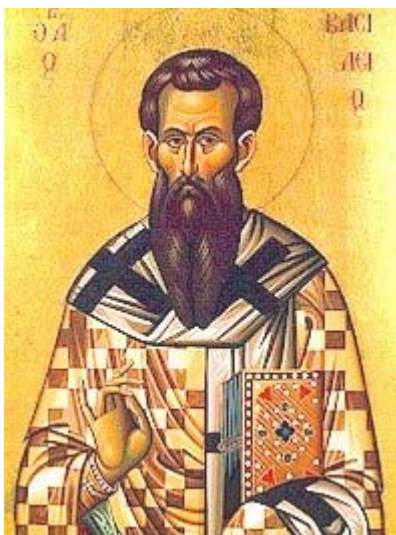
### Creation of the Earth, the Visible World.

After the creation of Heaven, the invisible, angelic world, God created out of nothing, by His word alone, **earth**, that is, the material from which He gradually made our visible, physical world, the visible sky, earth and all that is in them.

God could have created the world in a single instant, but since He wished from the very beginning that this world should live and develop step by step, He created it not in an instant, but over several periods of time, which in the Bible are called "days."



These "days" of creation were not the usual days that we know, consisting of twenty-four hours. Our days depend on the sun. However, during the first three "days" of creation there was no sun yet in existence, which means that the days described in Genesis could not have been the kind of days as we understand them. The Bible was written by the Prophet Moses in the ancient Hebrew language, and in this language both "day" and a period of time are called by the same word **Yom**. It is impossible for us to know exactly what kind of days these were, even more so since we know that *"one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"* (II Peter 3:8; Ps. 89:5).



The Holy Fathers of the Church consider the seventh "day" of the world to be continuing even at the present time, and that after the resurrection of the dead there will begin the **eighth eternal day**, that is, eternal future life. Thus **St. John of Damascus** (VIII century) writes concerning this: "The seven ages of this world are reckoned from the creation of Heaven and earth to the general conclusion and resurrection of men. For even though there is a personal ending, there is also a general, complete ending when there will be the general resurrection of men. The eighth age is the age to come."

**St. Basil the Great** in the fourth century wrote in his book *Hexaemeron*: "Therefore whether you call it a day or an age, you express one and the same idea."

Therefore, in the beginning, the matter created by God did not have any definite shape or form; it was formless and undeveloped (like fog or water) and covered with darkness, and the Spirit of God was borne upon it, imparting to it life-bearing power.

**Note:** The Holy Bible begins with the words: *"In the beginning God created Heaven and the earth"* (Gen. 1:1).

**In the beginning** in Hebrew is *bereshit* and means "first of all" or "at the beginning of time," that is, before bereshit there was only eternity.

**Created** here is expressed by the Hebrew word *bara*, which means "**created out of nothing.**" It is distinguished from the Hebrew word *assa*, which means "to make, to form, to shape out of matter." The word *bara* (created out of nothing) is used three times in the account of the creation of the world: 1) in the beginning — the first act of creation, 2) at the creation of "living souls" — the first animals, and 3) at the creation of man.

Strictly speaking, nothing more is said concerning Heaven, that is, it was finished in its formation. This is, as was said above, the spiritual, angelic world. Later in the Bible the Holy Scriptures speak of the heavenly **firmament**, called "heaven" by God, as a reminder of the higher, spiritual Heaven.

*"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"*

(Gen. 1:2). "Earth" here is understood to mean the original matter, still not put into form, from which the Lord God during the six "days" formed and made the visible world — the universe. This unformed matter or chaos is called the deep, as being unfathomable and unlimited space and water, as a water-like or mist-like matter.

**Darkness** was **upon the face of the deep**, that is, the entire chaotic mass was submerged in darkness, due to the complete absence of light.

**And the Spirit of God** was borne above the water: here began the creative work of God. By this expression "was borne" (the Hebrew word used here has the following meaning: "to embrace everything with oneself as a bird with its wings spread out embraces and warms its fledglings"), the action of the Spirit of God upon the first-created matter should be understood as the imparting to it of the living power which was necessary for its formation and development.

All three Persons of the Most-holy Trinity participated in the creation of the world equally, as the Triune God, One in essence and Indivisible. The word "God" in this place is written in the plural *Elohim*, that is **Gods** (the singular is *Eloah* or *El*— God), and the word "**created**" (**bara**) — is in the singular. In this way the original Hebrew text of the Bible, from its very first lines, points to the singular essence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, saying as it were, "In the beginning Gods (the three Persons of the Holy Trinity) created Heaven and earth."

The Psalms also clearly speak of this: *"By the Word of the Lord the Heavens were established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth"* (Ps. 32:6). Here "Word" means the **Son of God**, "Lord" means **God the Father** and "the Spirit (breath) of His mouth" means God the Holy Spirit.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is plainly called "Word" in the Gospel: *"In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:1-3).

It is especially important for us to know this, because the creation of the world would have been impossible if there had not first been the voluntary will of the Son of God to endure the sacrifice of the Cross for the salvation of the world. *"All things were created by Him" (the Son of God) "and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist: And He is the head of the body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven"* (Col. 1:16-20).

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

"The Parish Vine"

Published monthly by the St. Herman of Alaska Youth Group of St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church of Ann Arbor, MI with the Blessing of Priest Gregory Joyce, Rector

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