



FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF CHRIST

Quarterly Bulletin of Saint John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church

Diocese of the West - Orthodox Church in America

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No. 4

AUGUST

2020

Rev. Edward Henderson

A New Year and A New Decade...Revisited

In our bulletin, published in January of this year, I reflected upon this new year and new decade, writing: “A new decade can evoke great hope and excitement. We wonder at what new accomplishments we may achieve, what new technological advances we may see, how our society will develop in the next ten years.” 2020 has not been the year we had hoped for or expected. In March, just two weeks after we began Great Lent, the unthinkable occurred: our society shut down in response to the COVID-19 virus. Our local governments ordered us to remain home, closing schools, businesses, and even churches. Our diocesan bishop, as did every other bishop in this country, directed his parishes to abide by the instructions of our local health departments. Of course, the initial shut down was to be in force for only three weeks. COVID-19 is highly contagious and causes severe illness in about 20% and death in about 3% of those who contract it. We were told that sheltering in place would prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed and afford us time to better prepare for more cases.

Over four months have now passed and we still live under government restrictions. Although, our parish was able to reopen in late May, we have already been through a

second closing and a second reopening. Moreover, we operate under heavy restrictions, abiding by them to the best of our ability. Several hierarchs now openly question the motives behind the restrictions placed on churches by the civil authorities. His Eminence, Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America (ROCOR), wrote an open letter to the Governor of California protesting against such restrictions. Despite the rising cases in our nation and our state, we are seeing a dramatic decline in the mortality rate. Generally speaking, our hospitals are not overwhelmed and we no longer see shortages in preventative supplies, such as face masks and hand sanitizer. By God's grace, there have been no reports of any of our parishioners contracting this virus. Thus the restrictions mandated on churches by the civil authorities appear to be more motivated by politics than public health.

In May, after an African-American man died in police custody in Minneapolis, demonstrations and rioting erupted across our country. Demonstrations and marches, authorized by local governments, saw people gather in ways contrary to public health department guidelines. Likewise, the very people who advocated for the government restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19 have often advocated in favor of public gatherings, whether peaceful or violent, in response to the murder of George Floyd.

The message to churches is clear- your ministry, your worship, your place in society is non-essential. Gathering together to worship has been equated with gathering socially in a movie theater, bar, or night club. At the same time, gathering together to denigrate law enforcement, riot, deface public monuments, vandalize homes and businesses, and harass, physically assault, and tarnish the reputation of those who voice any disagreement with the organizers of such gatherings, are deemed acceptable and even receive acclamation.

Such is the time we live in. Nevertheless, Our Lord Jesus Christ told His very disciples: "In the world, you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Despite these difficult days, our parish carries on. When our doors were closed, we continued to serve the services and pray for all of you. We will, with God's help, do everything to keep the parish open, to make available for our people the Divine services and sacraments, and to support all of you as you carry a heavy cross. Such has always been the work of the Church and to label it as non-essential must be rejected as blasphemous.

As we carry on through this strange and difficult year, let us again look to the wisdom of Saint Paul's words: "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39)

Namesdays, Birthdays, and Anniversaries

August 16- Birthday of Boris Gerlovin

August 20- Birthday of Elena Latour

September 30- Namesday of Lubov Berlyant

October 9- Namesday of John (Caleb) Lewis

October 13- Anniversary of Fr. Edward's ordination to the priesthood

If you would like your namesday, birthday, and/or anniversary included in the future, please contact Fr. Edward at revedwardhenderson@gmail.com.

Holy Synod Awards Fr. Edward

At their Spring Session, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America awarded Fr. Edward the right to wear the gold pectoral cross.

Memory Eternal

On June 18, our beloved sister in Christ, parishioner, and former parish council member, Olga Ivanovna Shkurkina, reposed in Lord. Funeral and burial services were held at the Serbian Cemetery in Colma on June 25. May her memory be eternal!

Special Announcement

On Sunday, July 12, Fr. Edward, on behalf of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, awarded Anastasia D. Klimko a grammota in recognition of her service to the parish. Anastasia served as choir director for two years and stood down on May 31 of this year.

Parish Life and COVID-19

Public services have resumed in the parish. However, there are restrictions in place so that we may best conform to the guidelines set forth by the Holy Synod of Bishops and our own diocese. Although we hope to see these restrictions abate, we may see further restrictions in the future that could affect our service schedule. However, it is foreseeable that for the next several months we will carry on as we have ever since we first reopened to the public. Along with restrictions, we will continue to broadcast our services via Zoom, allow those Orthodox Christians who do not feel safe gathering in public to receive Holy Communion after the Divine Liturgy, and offer the Sacrament of Confession by telephone.

Schedule of Services

Sundays: Divine Liturgy at 10:00am

Saturdays: Vigil *or* Great Vespers at 6:00pm

August, September, October services

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| Tuesday, August 18 | | Vigil | 6:00pm |
| Wednesday, August 19 | Transfiguration | Liturgy | 10:00am |
| Thursday, August 27 | | Vigil | 6:00pm |
| Friday, August 28 | Dormition | Liturgy | 10:00am |
| Thursday, September 10 | | Vespers | 6:00pm |
| Friday, September 11 | Beheading of Saint John the Baptist | Liturgy | 10:00am |
| Sunday, September 20 | | Vespers | 6:00pm |
| Monday, September 21 | Nativity of the Theotokos | Liturgy | 10:00am |
| Tuesday, October 13 | | Vespers | 6:00pm |
| Wednesday, October 14 | Protection of the Theotokos | Liturgy | 10:00am |

More detailed service schedules are available on the parish website and at the candle desk.

Upcoming Events

August 14-August 28: Dormition Fast

“...evil by nature is fragmented, unstable, multiform, and divisive. If the good by its nature unifies and gathers together things that are divided, it is obvious that evil divides and destroys what is united.”

-Venerable Maximus the Confessor

