

“КРАСНОЕ СОЛНЫШКО”

“SUNSHINE”

CHURCH BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH “ST. VLADIMIR”, HOUSTON

JUNE, 2009

“Today Constantine and his mother Helen reveal the precious Cross”

Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena



In the Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena, the Orthodox Christians may see a parallel to the Equal-to-the-Apostles Kniaz’ Vladimir and his grandmother, Kniaginia Olga. Both brought a great blessing to their flock and to the whole world by submitting both themselves and their kingdoms to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus.

When Constantine sought divine help to overcome the contenders for rulers of the mighty Roman empire, Maximian Galerius and Maxentius, the Lord showed him the sign of the Cross in the heavens and below it the words: “In this sign conquer”. The armies of Constantine did indeed overcome these fierce pagan rulers which made it possible for him to extend the liberty of the Edict of Milan (enacted in 313) over his entire empire in 323. After nearly three centuries of persecution Christians were free to celebrate the love and joy of the Gospel of Christ’s triumph openly and their creativity flourished in every area of human life.

The Cross had been emblazoned on the shields and banners of Constantine’s soldiers. To this day Orthodox Christians place this triumphant symbol upon themselves, signing themselves with it piously, attentively, prayerfully, gratefully and joyfully. It shields us from temptation and reminds us of our call to manifest its victory by speaking and acting as the One Who embraced all of creation with His arms stretched out upon it.

Having obtained such a victory, Constantine thirsted to find the actual Cross upon which Jesus had fought His triumphant battle. He sent his mother, Helena, to Jerusalem and she, with the Patriarch Macarius, did indeed find the true Cross there and saw to the building of the splendid Church of the Resurrection over the spot. She also had Churches erected over other holy sites, including the cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Of humble birth, Helena, a Christian, had been divorced by Constantine's father, Constantius Chlorus, who sought to further his political status by marrying a woman of noble rank. He had nonetheless refrained from persecuting Christians. And just as Vladimir had been influenced by his grandmother, Olga, in his choice of a universal faith which would unite his subjects, so was Constantine influenced by his Christian mother, to whom he restored imperial dignity when he ascended to his throne.

He also convened the first Ecumenical Council in 325, just two years after consolidating his rule over the entire empire, and this affirmed the Orthodox faith in Christ as true God as well as true Man, giving us the first seven articles of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This Council also established the Canon of the Scriptures for the entire world as well as regulating the celebration of Pascha. The magnificent city of Constantinople, which he founded as the new Rome, stands as a testimony to Constantine's faith, even though it is called Istanbul today and there are very few Christians in it.

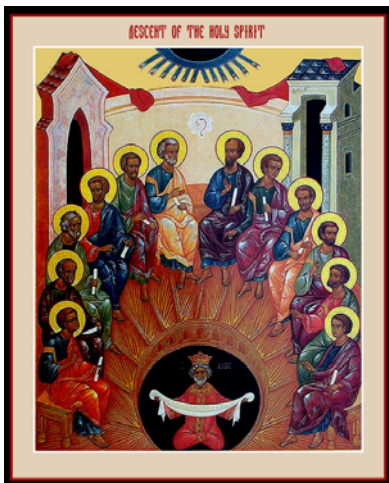
Constantine prepared for his Baptism all life. He was baptized upon his deathbed, reposing in the Lord at Pentecost. He was buried in the Church of the Apostles in a crypt he had prepared for himself.

May the love between our Lord and His two friends the Christian rulers Constantine and Helena inspire us to find victory in our own lives through the sign of the Cross, by which our Lord brought into the world a life which can not be touched by death. Amen.

Very Reverend Ihor Kutash
www.ukrainian-orthodoxy.org



PENTECOST - HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY



Pentecost (also called Trinity Day or Descent of the Holy Spirit) is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated fifty days after Pascha (thus always falling on a Sunday).

Fifty days after the Resurrection, on the exciting Jewish feast of Pentecost, while the disciples and many other followers of Jesus Christ were gathered together to pray, the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the form of "cloven tongues of fire," with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and they began to speak in languages that they did not know. There were many visitors from the Jewish Diasporas to Jerusalem at that time for the Jewish observance of the feast, and they were astonished to hear these untaught fishermen speaking praises to God in

their alien tongues. This account is detailed in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2.

The number fifty, as in the fiftieth day after Pascha, stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment, seven times seven, plus one.

The Orthodox Church sees Pentecost as the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God, mystically present in his Church. It is traditionally called the beginning of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.



Besides celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit, the feast also celebrates the full revelation of the divine Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hymns of the Church, celebrate the sign of the final act of God's self-disclosure to the world of His creation.

For the feast of Pentecost the icon of the Holy Trinity, the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, is placed in the center of the church for veneration. This icon is used with the traditional Pentecost icon. The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine breath comes to renew all creation. Green vestments and coverings are also used.

The Feast of the Holy Spirit

*O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth,
Who art everywhere and fillest all things;
Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life – come and abide in us,
and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls,
O Good One.*

The Monday after Pentecost is the Feast of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the Feast of All Saints.

Even though the start of the Church year is considered to start in September, the liturgical center of the annual cycle of Orthodox worship is the feast of Pascha, preceded by Great Lent, and pre-lent, and followed by the fifty days of paschal celebration until the feast of Pentecost. Until the start of the next Great Lent, the Sundays and weeks following Pentecost, are numbered from Pentecost. Liturgical readings and hymns will be based on the "weeks after Pentecost" as listed in the Octoechos, Apostolos, and Lectionary arranged Gospel.



SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS

Among Eastern Orthodox, All Saints Sunday follows the ancient tradition of commemorating all saints collectively on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

The feast of All Saints achieved great prominence in the ninth century, in the reign of the Byzantine Emperor, Leo VI "the Wise" (886–911). His wife, Empress Theophano—

commemorated on December 16—lived a devout life. After her death, her husband built a church, intending to dedicate it to her. When he was forbidden to do so, he decided to dedicate it to "All Saints," so that if his wife were in fact one of the righteous, she would also be honored whenever the feast was celebrated. According to tradition, it was Leo who expanded the feast from a commemoration of All Martyrs to a general commemoration of All Saints, whether martyrs or not.



This Sunday marks the close of the Paschal season. To the normal Sunday services are added special scriptural readings and hymns to all the saints (known and unknown) from the Pentecostarion.

The Sunday following All Saints Sunday—the second Sunday after Pentecost—is set aside as a commemoration of all locally venerated saints, such as "All Saints of Russia", "All Saints of Mount Athos", etc. The third Sunday after Pentecost may be observed for even more localized saints, such as "All Saints of St. Petersburg", or for saints of a particular type, such as "New Martyrs of the Turkish Yoke."

In addition to the Sundays mentioned above, Saturdays throughout the year are days for general commemoration of all saints and special hymns to all saints are chanted from the Octoechos.



ON THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OF RUSSIA

Saint John of Shanghai & San Francisco

The feast of All Saints of Russia is not a feast of just righteous ones, but of saints. God is filled with holiness; "Holy is the Lord our God." But man is created in the "image and likeness" of God, and the Lord at creation blew into him the power to partake of the Divine essence and thereby come closer to God, and the closer a man is to God, the holier he is. Saints are those who have partaken of the Divine essence and made it their own; to God, they become "His own." The saints enjoy blessedness, for God is blessed. From them there is light for men. Through them the power of God is revealed. Saints retain all that is characteristic of the human condition; they know everything that is ours. They are near to God, but they are also near to us; they walked and dwelt among us. The people of Holy Russia venerated them, kissed their icons and holy relics, wanted to be as close as possible to the saints, touched holiness, and the Russian land was filled with it. Holy Prince Vladimir demonstrated the regenerating power of the Divine essence upon himself. Previously wild and passionate, he was completely reborn, so that he became a new person, radiating light and joy, and was called "beautiful sun." Do not think that contact with holiness is the fate of only the Russian nation. No! All peoples can live in the spirit that Holy Russia lived and lives in, and then they are close and comprehensible



to each other. St. Anthony of the Kiev Caves and St. Anthony the Roman were men of different countries, but together they built the Russian Church, and they are equally near and dear to her. Until recent times we did not have martyrs, but there was a multitude of saints. They influenced the direction that the Russian people took; the people loved them and tried to follow them, and this determined the way of life. All of life was illuminated, until spiritual apostasy began, which led to a fall. But Holy Russia is alive. When the persecution began, strugglers were revealed, confessors, and now we have martyrs. The spirit of Holy Russia lives. Holy Russia is part of the Ecumenical (i.e., the entire) Church. Celebrating the saints, we desire to be together with them and to acquire the power of God through their holiness. They know us, our nature, our characteristics and spirits, and they know our souls, too-what is necessary for us. We are close to them as

children are close to parents. The Apostle Peter prayed for his disciples. St. Demetrius of Thessalonica rushes to help the Greeks because this is his own nation. Sts. Boris and Gleb help their relatives (e.g., Alexander Nevsky), and their own Russian people.



From the Fathers

Prayer within the Heart

Where there is prayer, God is present, especially when that prayer comes from within the heart. God loves to hear us pray when we pray from the heart, as He is quick to listen to us and to respond to us with a greater love than we would ever experience on this earth.

True prayer is in the heart. So many of us sometimes find it difficult to pray, and we need reminding that when we do pray we should do so with all of our mind, our heart, and our soul. The need then is to take the prayer from our mind - before it reaches our lips - and let it enter our heart: and then we let the heart say the prayer. The most commonly known prayer is the 'Prayer of the Heart', Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. Even the Orthodox ascetics knew that in order for them to progress to true prayer, they had to learn with faith to pray within the heart and therefore have communion with our Lord God. No matter what prayers we say in Church, at home, and indeed anywhere, prayer from within the heart is spiritually rewarding for us.

Of course we cannot put our trust in ourselves as we pray - we are frail and fallible. What we do need is the proper guidance to pray, and so when we do pray we turn to our loving Almighty God, confident that He will guide us, as He loves to hear us pray within the

heart. Does He listen to our prayer, especially when it's from within the heart? Yes! God knows that we want to pray, but time and again temptation comes our way, and of course the devil himself wants to prevent us from praying, or having any communion with our Lord God. Everything we do, every word we speak, every thought we have, every feeling that we experience is supposed to be in accordance with the words of the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to act upon these teachings, and when we become weak in our spiritual lives we can then find great strength in praying within the heart.

In those times when we actually fail, and stop praying to God, the sense of being abandoned by God sets in, and the presence of His Divine Light is then replaced by a heavy darkness of the passions which are in revolt, a great change takes place in us, and conflict rends the soul - a bitter state of mind and heart to be in. But our gracious God has an eternal promise for us who believe in Him and would seek to rid ourselves of the hard-heartedness that besets us. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26). He will! He does!



We, as Christians, cannot allow pride and self-sufficiency to take hold of us, thinking we do not need God - we do! The way to keep that Divine Light which is the love of our God constantly in our hearts is to pray from within the heart of flesh which He has given us by His Spirit.

Our faith in our God too can help win the battle. "But, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren" (St. Luke 22:32). Therefore our prayer within the heart must be filled with faith as we are then strengthened and spiritually comforted.

When we do pray how do we do this prayer? When is the last time we actually prayed in prostration before God and cried out, weeping in prayer like the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner," (St. Luke 18:13) or even cry out like the Holy Apostle Peter: "Lord, save me" (St. Matthew 14:30). How about the way the Holy Prophet and God-Seer Moses prayed? He kept his arms uplifted in prayer. When is the last time a tear fell from our eyes in prayer? When is the last time we lifted up our arms to our God in prayer? Then again when is the last time we prayed from our hearts within? In praying we need to come before our God with great humility and with compunction.

Humility can help us to spiritually overcome the pride of our prayer, since humility does suspend pride. We cannot create our own world, but rather what we should be doing, in praying within the heart, is to realize that humility is quick to receive life from God.

Our Gracious Lord God will never abandon us when we struggle with prayer within the heart, just as our Lord watched over the ascetics within the Church, and the Saints of the Church. What is important for us all to realize is that our Lord watches over us and is aware when we are wrestling with the enemy. He is always with us and we should never be afraid. Even when we think everything around is failing, and the powers beyond us

want us to fail, we must allow our faith to be strong, and turn to our Gracious God in prayer once again.

As Orthodox Christians we should seek to be pious in our prayer, putting our trust in God, and dwelling in prayer. Let us not be troubled, because we only make our enemy happy. Prayer from within truly delights our God!

Pray from within the heart, for when we pray we behold the Saints, and can discern the way those Saints followed, finding the true Divine Light of the presence of our Lord God in our hearts and in our lives. Pray! Pray within the heart!

Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes



Wisdom from the Fathers

Strive as well as you can to enter deeply with the heart into the church reading and singing and to imprint these on the tablets of the heart.

Abbot Nazarius

Blessed is he who always has before his eyes that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 23:1), and keeps in mind that God is powerful to arrange for His servants as is pleasing to Him.

St. Barsanuphius

It is better to eat meat and drink wine and not to eat the flesh of one's brethren through slander.

Abba Hyperechius

Every day you provide your bodies with good to keep them from failing. In the same way your good works should be the daily nourishment of your hearts. Your bodies are fed with food and your spirits with good works. You aren't to deny your soul, which is going to live forever, what you grant to your body, which is going to die.

St. Gregory the Great

Behold, through the truth of Christian humility you will be able to achieve victory over every vice, that is by attributing to God rather than to yourself the fact that you have won.

St. Martin of Braga

God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.

St. Seraphim of Sarov



HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY
Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia
Jordanville, New York

Holy Trinity Monastery is a male monastic community under the auspices of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.



They are dedicated to a life of prayer and obedience according to the pre-Revolutionary monastic tradition. They draw their origins from the Pochaev Lavra of St. Job of Pochaev in Southern Ukraine when monks fled from Pochaev in the face of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. As descendants of the Lavra of Pochaev, they continue the mission established by St. Job in the 15th century to publish books for the edification and protection of the faithful. Within the monastery is located a studio and school of Russian iconography conducted by disciples of master iconographer Fr. Cyprian (Pijoff). Also situated within the monastic community is Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary,

with young men from around the world training for the holy priesthood and ministry within our Church. Consisting of impressive buildings and another-worldly way of life, Holy Trinity Monastery is a source of spiritual nourishment and support for the Orthodox Church.

When Fr. Panteleimon first settled on the present location of Holy Trinity Monastery, he began to build a large house with sufficient rooms for the future monastery, including its own house church. With the help of four new brothers, including Bishop Vitaly, progress continued slowly. After much labor, in 1935 the house with its church was completed and the tiny brotherhood was ready to move in. But God deigned something else for the new community.

On July 17 a triumphant blessing of the house and church was held with a small group of neighbors and friends in attendance. Toward the end of the liturgy a cry of "fire!" was heard: a fire had suddenly broken out on the second floor of the new house. In the course of a couple hours, before the eyes of everyone, the new house and its church with all of their contents totally burnt to the ground. The small brotherhood was left with out any money, in debt, under the open sky. Fr. Panteleimon and his companions were shaken and left in confusion over the tragedy, and tried to find a reason for the disaster. After deep reflection, they decided that what they had built was not worthy for what God intended for the future monastery. They began to rebuild anew, and laid the foundation for a large separate stone church, which with God's help was the first of the large buildings that now make up Holy Trinity Monastery and later Seminary as we know them today.

For more information, please visit <http://www.jordanville.org>.



MISCELLANEOUS

Thank You...

...to all those who helped make the pre-Holy Trinity cleanup a success.

...to all who donated flowers for the feast, and the time spent decorating. Our Church has looked so beautiful!

...to all sisters participated in the organization of the lunch after the feast liturgy.

...to all who worked so hard to beautify our Church and parish house for the Feast of the Holy Trinity. Nice work, ladies!

The Day of Youth of the Russian Church Abroad

The Day of All Saints is the Day of Youth in the Russian Church Abroad. This celebration is intended to include all three main socio-cultural groups of the youth of our Holy Church: young people living in Russia, abroad and those who converted to Orthodoxy in the countries of the Russian Church Abroad. In connection with this, our clergy is called to special prayers on this day for our young people and to organize edifying events for them.

His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, at the opening of the 12th World Russian People's Council in Moscow, said: "The youth is not only our future, but also our present. Young people deserve our special attention by virtue of the fact that they are called upon to open new paths to disseminate the truths of the Gospel. Without the youth, we would not only be deprived of the ability to progress, we would stagnate." And further: "But if we attract and unite our youth, especially those young people who burn with love for God and the desire to serve the Church and Fatherland, we will be able to accomplish great feats to the benefit of the Church, Orthodoxy and our much-suffering Motherland." Our late Vladyka added: "The Russian Church Abroad, scattered throughout the world, can especially fulfill this mission, fostering the expansion of Orthodoxy and its great legacy among the peoples, spreading the good news to those 'which were afar off, and to them that were nigh' (Ephesians 2:17)."

Source: www.synod.com

NEW BOOKLETS



Please ask in our kiosk to obtain the new booklets in English and Russian, available at no cost at the candle stand. And check often – soon more will be offered.

Here is the list of titles:

- **GUIDE TO CONFESSION**
- **Orthodox Practice - On Going to Church**
- **ORTHODOX TRADITIONS and CHURCH ETIQUETTE**

- **THE FASTING RULE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**
- **Первые шаги в храме**
- **Православный храм.**

Правила поведения христиан в православном храме

- **Как должно молиться в церкви**

Copies of **The Creeds** and **The Jesus Prayer** are also available.

New booklets in Russian and English:

- **The Sacrament of Holy Unction**
- **The Sacrament of Confession**
- **The Sacrament of Baptism and Holy Chrismation**
- **The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist**
- **The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony**
- **The Sacrament of Holy Order**
- **PASCHAL HOURS**
- **Guidelines for Proper Conduct in Church** (by Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko, +1960)

LAST MONTH'S BULLETIN



If you haven't yet picked up last Month's bulletin from May, it is available at the candle-stand in the church, or it can be requested by e-mail from the senior sister Ekaterina (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu).

HOSPITAL/NURSING HOME VISITS



If you or your loved one are not able to come to Church to receive Holy Communion and would like a visit, please contact Father Lubomir at (281) - 580 – 4374 to set up an appointment

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Catechesis classes

The syllabus for Catechesis classes in the Sunday School is available upon request. Please, contact the Senior Sister Ekaterina. (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu, 713-790-1336)

Now we offer to the students Russian Orthodox movies for The Old and New Testaments lessons. Please, encourage your children to attend regularly in Sunday school classes!

Many thanks

To our great teachers Mrs. I. Smakotina and Mr. V. Sharin for their excellent lessons for music and Catechesis accordingly!

TO SUBMIT ENTRIES FOR THE CHURCH BULLETIN



All parishioners are asked, (if you have desire for), to submit entries (news, articles, announcements, etc... in English or Russian) for our Church bulletin as early in the month as possible, and no later than the 15th, each month (so your material could be included the very next issue). If at all possible, please submit your material by e-mail to Editor Ekaterina Marinova (senior sister) at marinova@bcm.tmc.edu. Entries also can be dropped off in the church, during scheduled services.

I encourage all of you, please make an effort to participate and contribute to our future newsletters.

IF YOU ARE HOSPITALIZED



Please be sure to let your reverend Fr. Lubomir know. Even if you do not want a visit, prayers (private and/or communal) should be offered on your behalf. Your priest is not clairvoyant and will not know that you are in the hospital unless you tell him. When you check into the hospital, be sure to put yourself in the hands of the Divine Physician as well as an earthly one!

IF YOU ARE TRAVELING



If you are traveling and would like prayers offered on your behalf, please let the reverend know. Every time we begin a trip, no matter how short, we should begin with prayer and the sign of the Cross. But before embarking upon a lengthy journey, such as requires us to travel by air or sea, we do well to ask for a special blessing. Such a blessing can be received following the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday before traveling or at any other requested time.

Collecting Coins to support our parish life



Please remember to keep filling your coin jars. If each of us filled the jar with pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters and donate them, think how we could surprisingly support our parish life here at St. Vladimir Church. You might have already filled jars and please bring them to the Church. If you have any further questions or would like an empty coin jar please contact Ekaterina (marinova@bcm.tmc.edu) or Lydia (lydia.krawtzowa@windstream.net)

Posted by the Senior-Sister Ekaterina.

(Some sources for this issue have been used from the web net as indicated)

Photo Gallery – Holy Trinity 2009

