



**St. Michael the
Archangel Serbian
Orthodox
Mission
Newsletter
May 2011**

Christ is Risen!

**Saturday's - Vespers
6:00 P.M.**

**Sunday's - Divine Liturgy
10:00 A.M.**

“Even while feasting on the good things permitted to us in this joyful season, we should yet thirst for what lies above the earth, for the Holy Spirit, Whose coming we await even while we enjoy the presence among us of the Risen Lord.”

Fr. Seraphim Rose

Important Upcoming Church Dates:

Sunday, May 1st – Antipascha, St. Thomas

Sunday, May 8th – The Myrrh-bearing Women.

Sunday, May 15th – The Paralyzed Man.

Wednesday, May 18th – Mid-Pentecost

Sunday, May 22nd – The Samaritan Woman.

Sunday, May 29th – The Blind Man

(see attached St. Michael's calendar or online)

✠ *Confessions are heard on Saturdays after Vespers; also on Sunday mornings before Divine Liturgy 9:40 am to 10 am.*

Announcements:

Saturday May 21st, noon to 4pm, Everyone is invited to a Paschal season potluck celebration at the Schultz's (including daughters Monica & Brigid) who will be visiting then. RSVP requested: mrs.ann.schultz@gmail.com

Check out our newly-revised website & calendar at www.easternorthodoxchurch.org (thank you Ashley Zarzaur!). Now you can just click on “Calendar” on the top menu bar and there you go!

News Items? Please send church news items to the Newsletter editor Rick Kaiser at:

rkmk2001@bellsouth.net

Father Gregory's contact info:

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ADDRESS CORRECTION FOR FR. GREGORY:

290 Maplewood Drive, Madison, AL 35758

Coffee Hour:

May 1st – Buksa

June 5th – Jokich

May 8th – Ellis

June 12th – Kaiser

May 15th – Gulas

June 19th – Pastrick

May 22nd – Lee

June 26th – Platt

May 29th – Speir

If you will be unable to serve coffee hour on your Sunday, please make arrangements to switch with another family. Thanks!

Church Needs:

Small Plates, Splenda, Cold Cups.

Birthdays:

God Grant Them Many Years!

15th – Peter Buksa

31st – Mary Zarzaur

Anniversaries:

29th – Michele & Don Platt

Church Cleaning:

May – Zarzaur

June – Bergantz

This is your Church – help keep it clean!

Prayer Requests: Please remember in your prayers: Child Jovana (2 years old – leukemia); Katarzyna Bazylewicz; Tatiana Kukhtareva; Mariam & Tom Calache; Mary Kochoff; Glenn Dengler (friend of Jokich family) and daughters Haley (7) and Nicole (3); Dessie Jokich (mother of Mike Jokich); Sandy & Roger Ellis; Daniel Ellis (brother of Roger); Ted Gulas; Edythe Hales; Markela Hatzakis; Brian Jokich; Elena Meagher and her son Igor; Anne Kobasa (mother of H. Bergantz); Rhonda Lovette; Tim & Ron Waskerwitz; Evangeline Pamfilis; Pat Darzy; Mary Zarzaur; Lola Gulas; and Thomas L. Snow (son-in-law of Joe and Helen) serving in Afghanistan and for the repose of Daniel Kobasa (Helen Bergantz' father) and Fryni McCreary.



The Paschal Season

Christ is Risen! It seems so long ago that we celebrated Pascha together, especially since so much has happened in our community with the devastating tornados, storms, the loss of lives, injuries, property damage and power outages!

Just as the main focus of the season of Great Lent was repentance, so now in the Paschal season, one of the main themes is faith. The Holy Church has provided us with specific themes during the Sundays following Pascha: 1. Apostle Thomas and his struggle with doubt, 2. The Myrrh Bearing Women and their virtue and love for our Lord which led to their discovery of the Resurrection, 3. The Paralytic who was ill for 38 years before being healed by the Lord and became His disciple, 4. The Samaritan Woman who found Faith in Christ and brought many others to that Faith, 5. The Blind Man, who despite being born blind, was healed and confessed Christ, 6. The Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council who gave us the Symbol of Faith, the Nicene Creed.

In each of the Gospel readings for these Sundays, faith is renewed, sin and infirmities are healed, virtue is revealed and the Risen Lord Jesus Christ is confessed to all. Faith then is the first step that we must take if we, too, will truly enter into the joy of our Lord's Resurrection and His Heavenly Kingdom.

Yet, the faith of many has been shaken over these past weeks. It is easy to understand how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and all those who were sinful and would not repent. It is not as easy to understand how people, who were good and kind and believed in God, suffered the destruction brought upon us by the recent tornados. Yet God's ways are not our ways. He does not conform or act according to our weak and materialistic way of thinking, but if He permits tribulations, it is ultimately for our benefit.

As Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev says in his book "The Meaning of Suffering," *God has created us not for sorrow, but for joy!...He placed man in Paradise...but [Adam and Eve] transgressed God's law...that is why [they] began to suffer...Christian faith brings joy even in suffering. It transforms*

the sorrows into bliss. With God it would be well, even in hell...on the other hand, without God it would be terrible even in Paradise."

We read about this relationship between suffering and joy in Holy Scripture:

In the world ye shall have tribulation (John 16:33)

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy (John 16:20)

All things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8:28)

Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (James 1:2 -- As St. Dimitri of Rostov teaches, the words "divers temptations" are to be understood as all kinds of sorrows, griefs, misfortunes, persecutions, embittering diseases and adversities, impoverishment, and suffering which occur either by God's permission or by human menace, or naturally, or by chance, or by an action of the devil.)

Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:2)

Often, it takes some extreme tribulation to reveal something good – a grain of sand gets into an oyster shell and causes irritation, but eventually a beautiful and priceless pearl is formed. A tragedy is unfolding, (i.e.; a house is on fire), but someone heroically acts to save a child trapped inside. Many in our community have noted the tremendous outpouring of help and kindness as people have opened their hearts toward their neighbors in this tragic time.

It's worth noting that while it is most inconvenient and uncomfortable to have to live without electricity for several days, until about 100 years ago, there was no electric power and all the comforts that it brings to our lives now. Even today, monks and nuns around the world live without these comforts.

We should always remember to count our blessings, for things could always be much worse! We could have lost our homes and belongings or lost loved ones or even our own lives, and yet God preserved us even in this. We must never doubt that God loves us and that all He does is for our benefit, which we may not fully understand now, but we will later – much like a child does not always understand why their parents make them do things that are for their benefit (such as making them go to bed, eat properly or discipline them when needed). The child would prefer to do whatever they want to do, to just have fun or eat sweets. So it is in our relationship with God. We might think that we know best, but we really are like little children under the watchful and loving care of God our Heavenly Father.

As we continue our spiritual journey now through the Paschal season toward the coming Feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost, let's use this time to strengthen and deepen our faith, to come to church and give thanks and praise to God for His love for us and all that He has done for us! Christ is Risen!

In Christ,
+Fr. Gregory