

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



Volume 11, Issue 9 The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church May 2010

Christos a Inviat! Christ is Risen! Христос воскрес! ΑΙ ΜΑΣΕΕΗ QAM! Χριστος Ανεστη!

We Celebrate the Coming of the Spirit on Pentecost...

On Sunday, May 23rd, we will celebrate the great **Feast of Pentecost**. We begin with Vigil on Saturday evening, serve the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, and then complete our celebration with the Vespers of Pentecost and the special Kneeling Prayers - the first time in fifty days that we kneel in the church - immediately after the Liturgy. Pentecost is as essential an event in the divine economy of our salvation as is Pascha. **Pentecost fulfills Pascha**, in that the risen and glorified Christ sends the Holy Spirit into the world in fulfillment of the promise He made to His disciples. The Church could not live or "breathe" without the life-creating presence of the Holy Spirit. A bit more precisely, we could further relate Pentecost to the Feast of Ascension, as the Orthodox biblical scholar Veselin Kesich does in the following manner:

With Christ's Ascension, "our nature ascended" to heaven, and on Pentecost the Holy Spirit "descended on to our nature." The Ascension points to Pentecost, to the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit.

Or, again, in the words of Fr. John Breck:

This feast, nevertheless, like that of Ascension, reveals and fulfills the work of the Son of God for the salvation of the world. Rather than mark a simple transition from Easter joy to summer doldrums, it opens the way for us to share, directly and personally, in Christ's victory over the powers of sin and death.

Yet, it is hard to dispel the feeling that Pentecost is not approached or celebrated like the great Feast that it actually is. Pentecost seems to be treated as a "normal" Sunday. It is difficult to detect any real enthusiasm or anticipation of its coming. The church may or may not be a filled as usual - it all depends on everyone's personal circumstances or "plans" for the weekend. In fact, if Pentecost did not fall on a Sunday, it would suffer the same fate as the "lost" and neglected Feast of Ascension. Truly, it does seem to mark the "transition ... to summer doldrums!" How remote this all is from the Apostle Paul, who went out of his way to ensure his presence in Jerusalem for the Feast:

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

And all we have to do is get into our air-conditioned cars and drive a few miles to the church! Until we are able to overcome the tendency or temptation to pour all of our concentrated attention and energy on Pascha (and even here we basically limit Pascha to a one-day celebration), we will not understand the Church's greatest and most important liturgical cycle, centered around Pascha and culminating with Pentecost; or even understand some of our most basic teaching about the all-Holy Spirit. The saints teach us that to be filled with the Spirit, one must hunger and thirst for the Spirit's presence.

We will, of course, read the account of the first Pentecost at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, taken from chapter 2 of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The book known as the *Synaxarion* offers this summary of the events of the Feast:

Thus, on this day, the eighth Sunday of Pascha, the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth day after Pascha, at the third hour of the day from the rising of the sun, there suddenly came a sound from Heaven, as when a mighty wind blows, and it filled the whole house where the Apostles and the rest with them were gathered. Immediately after the sound, there appeared tongues of fire that divided and rested upon the head of each one. Filled with the Spirit, all those present began speaking not in their native tongue, but in other tongues and dialects, as the Holy Spirit instructed them.

The imagery here is of a dynamic and life-creating energy. And yet that "energy" has as its source the *Person* of the Holy Spirit, "Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." Thus, as the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is "Lord and Giver of Life." (Nicene Creed) As Fr. John Breck states it:

Therefore we proclaim, as Orthodox Christians, that the Spirit, as fully as the Father and the Son, is indeed a divine Person. Such is the faith, the bedrock conviction, of the Church.

We can again turn to Fr. John Breck for an insightful summary of the
[continued on page 3]

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Mother's Day Brunch
Sunday, May 9th. Following Divine Liturgy

HAPPY
MOTHERS DAY

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

Schedule of Services

Christ is risen! **May 2010** *Христос воскрес!*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
02 5 th Sunday of Pascha Sunday of the Samaritan Woman Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	03	04	05 wine & oil Leavetaking of Midfeast Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	06	07 wine & oil St Alexis Toth Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy	08 Holy Apostle John the Theologian Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
09 6 th Sunday of Pascha Sunday of the Blind Man Mother's Day Charity Brunch Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	10	11 Ss Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs	12 wine & oil Leavetaking of Pascha Forefeast Confessions 5:00 pm Vigil of Ascension 6:00 pm	13 Ascension of the Lord Divine Liturgy 7:00 am	14 wine & oil S'burg Area 'Small Group' Fellowship 7:00 pm	15 Amboy Park ***Pavilion*** Liturgy & Picnic Asheville, NC 10:30 am Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
16 7 th Sunday of Pascha Sunday of the Fathers of the 1 st Ec Council Divine Liturgy 9:30 am Slavonic Molioben 12:30 pm	17	18	19 wine & oil Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	20	21 wine & oil Leavetaking of the Ascension Equals to the Apostles, Ss Contantine and Helen	22 Confessions Vigil of Pentecost 6:00 pm
23 8 th Sunday of Pascha Holy Pentecost Holy Trinity Divine Liturgy w/ Chrismations 9:30 am Kneeling Prayers	24 Feast of the Holy Spirit St John's Women's Group 6:30 pm @ the O'Shaughnessy's House	25 3 rd Day of the Holy Trinity 	26 fast-free Inquirers' Class 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	27	28 fast-free	29 Confessions Great Vespers 6:00 pm
30 st Sunday after Pentecost Sunday of All Saints Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	31 fast Beginning of Ss Peter and Paul Fast	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; background-color: #f0f0f0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">A Word from the Desert</p> <p style="text-align: center;">He [Anthony the Great] said also, "Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God; but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ." St Anthony the Great, Sayings of the Desert Fathers, #9</p> </div>				

Fellowship and Goffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy

Church School: Sundays through May 9th at 9 am (before Divine Liturgy)

Ghoir Rehearsal: Saturdays as scheduled (see schedule above)

Confessions: Saturday Evenings following Great Vespers, and as scheduled (or by appointment)

Inquirers' Glass and Fellowship: Wednesdays following Vespers, as scheduled

Liturgy and Picnic sponsored by Asheville area Orthodox communities. More info in coming weekly bulletins.

Χριστος Ανεστη! ΑΙ Μασεη Qam! Christos a Inviat!

Where there is humility, there also is the grace of Christ, and this grace is the Kingdom of Heaven.

~~~~ an Athonite staretz (quoted in *A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain*) ~~~~

**'We Celebrate the Coming of the Spirit...'** [continued from page 1]

manifest gifts and "workings" of the Holy Spirit as the presence of God in our midst. In presenting the Apostle Paul's teaching on the Holy Spirit, we read the following:

*The Spirit ... prays within us and on our behalf (Rom. 8:26); He works out our sanctification (Rom. 15:16; I Cor. 6:11; II Thess. 2:13; cf. Gal. 5:16-18); He pours out God's love into the hearts of believers, enabling them to address the Father by the familiar and intimate name, "Abba" (Rom. 5:5; 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6); He confirms our status as "children of God" through His indwelling presence and power (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6); He guides and preserves the faithful in their ascetic struggle against the passions (Gal. 5:16); and He serves as the source and guarantor of our "freedom" from the constraints of the Law, a freedom which enables us to behold the glory of the Lord (II Cor. 3:17-18).*

The New Testament Church, from its initial mission to the world inaugurated on Pentecost, is thus "charismatic." We will pray fervently on Sunday, on "bended knees," that these very gifts of the Holy Spirit may become our own, and that by God's grace and boundless love, we may become living vessels of the Holy Spirit, here and now, as the apostles and saints have been throughout the ages. Yet, for this to happen, we need to be fervent rather than casual; filled with desire rather than indifference; praying rather than passing time in church. We can begin that essential transformation right now, during this year's celebration of the great Feast of Pentecost - not the transition to the usual "summer doldrums" but the "last and great day of the Feast" that inaugurates the liturgical cycle of the Spirit-filled "Sundays after Pentecost."

As a kind of appendix to the Meditation above, I would like to include a passage from Veselin Kesich's book, *The First Day of the New Creation*. In his discussion about Pentecost, Prof. Kesich offers a good summary of the Orthodox position concerning the issue of the *filioque*. As Orthodox Christians, we continue to recite the Nicene Creed in its original form, without the interpolation of the *filioque*, the Latin term that means "and from the Son," when proclaiming the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Prof. Kesich summarizes the Orthodox position based upon a careful reading of the Scriptures. The "*filioque controversy*" remains to this day a divisive point of contention between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches respectively - and those Western churches that also use the term. In the words of Prof. Kesich:

*It is equally true that the Father sends the Spirit (Jn. 14:16,26). The Son sends the Spirit, but the source of the Spirit is the Father, for the Spirit proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15:26). The verb "proceed" that is used in Jn. 15:26 is ekporeuomai. When it is said that the Son "comes forth" from the Father the verb is exerchomai. St. John consistently uses the latter verb whenever he speaks of the Son coming forth from the Father (8:42; 13:3; 16:27f.; 16:30; 17:8). The Spirit and the Son have the same and only origin. They are two distinct persons. Their missions are not identical. Although the Spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified (Jn. 7:39), yet it is nowhere stated in St. John's Gospel that the Spirit "proceeds" from the Son as he proceeds from the Father. Therefore, there is no filioque here.*

***At Pentecost it is customary that the church is decorated with flowers and the green sprigs and leaves of spring to show that God's divine breath, His Holy Spirit, comes to renew all creation. Please feel free to bring fresh cut greenery and flowers for the Vigil and Divine Liturgy of Pentecost. Green vestments and coverings are also used. Pentecost begins one of the three fast-free weeks on the Church's calendar!***

**'As Many as have been baptized into Christ...'**

***'Do Thou, O Lord God Almighty, the Source of all good things, the Sun of Righteousness, compassionate King of kings, grant also unto Thy servants the seal of the gift of Thy Holy, and Almighty, and Adorable Spirit and participation in the holy Body and precious Blood of Thy Christ...'***

**Please join us in receiving into the Church**

**John Michael Dolan,  
Yvonne Lynn Hyma,  
and  
Anthony Dale Satcher**

**through the Sacrament  
of Holy Chrismation**

**Pentecost Sunday  
May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 at 9:30 am**

**'Grown them, O Lord, with Glory and Honor...'**

**Please join us in celebrating the  
uniting in Christ of**

**Megan Gompton  
and  
David Galloway**

**through the Sacrament  
of Betrothal and Growning.**

**Pentecost Sunday  
May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 at 3:00 pm**



**2010 Financial Snapshot**

|                     | <b>Income</b>   | <b>Expenses</b> |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>February</b>     | <b>\$11,776</b> | <b>\$4,337</b>  |
| <b>YTD thru Feb</b> | <b>\$21,322</b> | <b>\$16,681</b> |
| <b>YTD Charity</b>  | <b>\$5,136</b>  | <b>\$4,995</b>  |

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS**

■ **ALMS SUNDAY**

May 9<sup>th</sup> is our Alms Sunday Charity and Mother's Day Brunch. The menfolk are providing a meal honoring the mothers in the church. The **Food Pantry** at United Ministries continues to need baby wipes, peanut butter, powdered milk, canned meats, and dry cereals. Donations can be put in the vestibule in the boxes marked for **United Ministries**.

■ **PANIKHIDA FOR JAMES L WHITE**

A Panikhida marking the one year anniversary of Jim White's falling asleep in the Lord will be served on Saturday, May 1st, at 5:15 pm before Great Vespers. May his memory be eternal!

■ **ASK THE PRIEST**

Our sessions will be held during coffee hour on May 16<sup>th</sup> (Russian-language and English-language).

■ **SJOTL WOMEN'S GROUP MEETING**

Monday, May 24th at 6:30pm. Hosted by Angie O'Shaughnessy: 501 Agewood Dr, Simpsonville, SC 29680

■ **ST JOHN OF THE LADDER GOLF OUTING!!!**

When: Sunday, May 16 --- 1<sup>st</sup> tee time: **1:00 pm**  
 Where: **Lakeview Golf Course**, Piedmont 6-7 mins from church  
 Who: **All interested**  
 Cost: \$27 includes green fee and cart (*cash, no credit or debit cards*)  
**Beverages and snacks provided!**  
 If interested, please contact **John Sucin** at 864-504-4950 or [jsucin@energyhardware.com](mailto:jsucin@energyhardware.com)

a reminder & a hearty 'thank you'!  
**May Fellowship and Coffee Hour**

|                      |                                    |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| May 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Team 3                             |
| May 9 <sup>th</sup>  | <i>Charity/Mother's Day Brunch</i> |
| May 16 <sup>th</sup> | Team 4                             |
| May 23 <sup>rd</sup> | Team 5                             |
| May 30 <sup>th</sup> | Team 6                             |

**Celebrating Birthdays and Anniversaries in May**

Rick & Tori Eich (1<sup>st</sup>), Glenna Brown (2<sup>nd</sup>), Christine Davis (2<sup>nd</sup>), Janessa Davis (2<sup>nd</sup>), Sheree Wickenkamp (3<sup>rd</sup>), Jamie & Jaye Levitsky (May 6<sup>th</sup>), Bobby & Christy Wood (May 6<sup>th</sup>), Fr Nikolay (9<sup>th</sup>), Sarah & Chris Taylor (May 9<sup>th</sup>), Irina & Jason Freund (17<sup>th</sup>), Emily Eich (17<sup>th</sup>), Vladimir & Glenna Gorelik (18<sup>th</sup>), Jason Freund (20<sup>th</sup>), Ed & Adele Webb (21<sup>st</sup>), Lee & Helen Serra (21<sup>st</sup>), Brighita Negrusa (22<sup>nd</sup>), Gleanor Burch (22<sup>nd</sup>), Chuck & Kirsten Small (24<sup>th</sup>), Helen Serra (26<sup>th</sup>), Bill Wamboldt (27<sup>th</sup>), Stephen O'Shaughnessy (28<sup>th</sup>)

**From the Sunday of Pentecost**

The pure and sacred Word cried out:  
 'I will not be separated from you, my friends,  
 for sitting upon the throne with the Father,  
 I will pour out the grace of the Spirit  
 upon those who desire it.'

~~~ *Ganon of the Feast* ~~~

St. John of the Ladder



Orthodox Church in America

701 Augusta Arbor Way, Piedmont [Greenville], SC 29673
 (864) 299-1140

www.stjohnoftheladder.org

VRev Fr Marcus C Burch, Rector
Rev Fr Nikolay Miletkov, Assistant

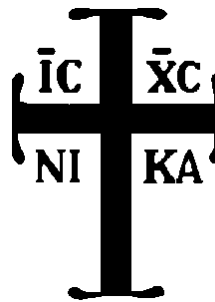
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Schedule of Services

Daily Vespers, Wednesday, 6:00 pm
Great Vespers, Saturday, 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday, 9:30 am

'Love is the complete repudiation of any unkind thought about one's neighbor, since "Love thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5).'

St John of the Ladder, The Ladder of Divine Ascent



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May 2010