

THE ST. ELIZABETH'S PARISH NEWS

St. Elizabeth's Orthodox Church

2263 E. Cherokee Dr. Woodstock, GA

A Parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople



Reverend Father Matthew Dutko, Pastor

Phone: 607-206-0384

Email: FatherDutko@gmail.com

Weekly Schedule:

Thursday 11/20 7:00 PM: Vespers for the eve of the Entrance of the Birthgiver of God into the Temple

Friday 11/21 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy for the Holy Day of the Entrance of the Birthgiver of God into the Temple

Saturday 11/22 5:00 PM: Great Vespers

Sunday 11/23 10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy

Welcome to Advent!

“And she gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2: 7)

We are now in the season of Advent which is the fasting period continuing until the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What does this mean for us as Orthodox Christians? It means that the days between now and Christmas are a time of preparation for our souls. Advent is the time of year when we prepare our souls for the coming of Christ into the world; which is the Incarnation of God in man in the person of Jesus Christ.

If we choose not to prepare ourselves by not fasting, not forgiving, not coming to confession, not being humble, not giving to the poor, and above all by not loving – then we have chosen to be like the innkeepers of Bethlehem. When we neglect to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ into the world on Christmas we, by our own choices, have left no room in the inn of our hearts for Christ to come.

Pretend for a moment that your soul is that very inn in Bethlehem, and your conscience is the innkeeper. Throughout the year we let all kinds of terrible visitors stay in that inn. We allow pride to come in and stay as long as it likes. To both lust and gluttony we give a warm bed and a free meal. We let anger in to stay for free as long as it likes. Advent is a time of year where we must evict these unwanted guests, so that when Christ knocks on door we can welcome Him into our hearts, and not send Him away because our hearts are full with the sins of the world.

The way in which we make ourselves ready to greet the Lord as did the Angels, the Shepherds and the Magi is by using the season of Advent to prepare our souls for the coming of the Lord into the world. We do this through increasing the amount of time that we pray. We do this by receiving the sacraments of the Church, especially through going to Confession and receiving Communion regularly. We do this through more fasting, through increased almsgiving, through forgiveness, humility, and above all through love.

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The St. Elizabeth News

To those who are new to fasting, fasting is a part of Orthodox as well as Biblical Tradition. Fasting is a Spiritual tool which God gives us so that we might grow closer in our relationship to Him.

Fasting goes far back in the tradition of the Church. It is found throughout the Old Testament as well as the New. Moses fasted for forty days; after which God was so pleased that he favored Moses with a most intimate conversation- this is when God gave Moses the tablets with the Ten Commandments inscribed on them. The prophet Elijah also fasted for forty days. Most importantly though, Jesus Himself fasted for forty days and forty nights in the desert before He began His public ministry.

Keep this in mind; it was not only Christ's fasting in the desert which prepared Him, but also His prayer. Fasting without prayer loses its meaning and purpose which is to grow closer to God. How can we grow closer to God if we don't talk with Him in prayer? With Christ as our great example, we see that we cannot separate prayer and fasting. It was through prayer and fasting together that Christ was able to resist the temptations of the Devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

Through fasting we are showing our submission and obedient to God. It can be difficult at first, but think of it like this: The athlete, lawyer, teacher, student, or anyone who seeks a worthwhile goal is perfectly willing to make the necessary sacrifices in order to succeed. How, then, do we expect to achieve our everlasting goal in paradise without any effort, with indifference, and without self-sacrifice on our part?

A successful fast can be gauged by one fact. The answer is not how much you abstain from, but how much you gain; how much closer have you come to knowing God. In order to grow closer to Christ we must get off to a flying start in our Advent fast! We must lay out our program carefully, and then stick to it from start to finish. If you're new to fasting start small and each year you can add a little more to your fast. It's better to meet the standard you set than cheat. Remember that the fast is for you and God and your relationship. This is why you should keep your fast a secret. God will be the one who knows your fast. This is why we must plan our fast carefully, so that we will fulfill the promise we have laid out before God.

I am not going to post a specific list of restrictions. For anyone who wishes to know more specifics I would be happy to guide you on a one on one basis. But to everyone I say this; Advent is a major fasting period in the Church. It is a time when we all prepare our souls for the coming of our Lord into the World. A time when we expel the unwanted guests taking residence in the inn of our souls, so that we can welcome Christ to be incarnate in each one of us. One of the ways in which we do this through practicing virtuous living and receiving the sacraments. Another way we do this is through prayer and fasting.

So, our fast during Advent should be more than what we do during the non-fasting seasons of the Church. It should also be more than whatever we did last year, so that we can grow closer and closer to Christ with the passing of each year.



Pani and I had a lovely time visiting friends and family for the past few days. I was blessed to serve the Liturgy on Saturday morning for the first time in my home parish. During that Liturgy I remembered all of you as I always do when I serve Liturgy. It was wonderful to celebrate such a milestone in my home parish, but now Pani and I look forward to returning to **our home** at St. Elizabeth's. We miss you all and look forward to seeing you! May God Bless all of you always!