

ARCHPRIEST MARTIN SWANSON, PASTOR  
PRIEST SERGII ALEKSEEV, ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
ARCHPRIEST RADOMIR CHKAUTOVICH, ATTACHED

A PARISH OF THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MID-AMERICA  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

March 2019

### Historical Development of the Great Fast

*Excerpt from the Introduction to the Lenten Triodion on the act of fasting*

The inner significance of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Divorced from prayer and from the reception of the holy sacraments, unaccompanied by acts of compassion, our fasting becomes pharisaical or even demonic. It leads, not to contrition and joyfulness, but to pride, inward tension and irritability. The link between prayer and fasting is rightly indicated by Father Alexander Elchaninov. A critic of fasting says to him: 'Our work suffers and we become irritable... I have never seen servants [in pre-revolutionary Russia] so bad tempered as during the last days of Holy Week. Clearly, fasting has a very bad effect on the nerves.' To this Father Alexander replies: 'You are quite right... If it is not accompanied by prayer and an increased spiritual life, it merely leads to a heightened state of irritability. It is natural that servants who took their fasting seriously and who were forced to work hard during Lent, while not being allowed to go to church were angry and irritable.'

Fasting, then, is valueless or even harmful when not combined with prayer. In the Gospels the devil is cast out, not by fasting alone, but by 'prayer and fasting' (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29); and of the early Christians it is said, not simply that they fasted, but that they 'fasted and prayed' (Acts 13:3; compare 14:23). In both the Old and the New Testament fasting is seen, not as an end in itself, but as an aid to more intense and living prayer, as a preparation for decisive action for direct encounter with God. Thus our Lord's forty-day fast in the wilderness was the immediate preparation for His public ministry (Matt. 4:1-11). When Moses fasted on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34:28) and Elijah on Mount Horeb (3 [1]Kgs. 19:8-12), the fast was in both cases linked with a theophany. The same connection between fasting and the vision of God is evident in the case of St. Peter (Acts 10:9-17). He 'went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth



### Special Services & Events

- Sat. March 2, 4:00 p.m. Pannyhida
- Mon. March 4, Cheese-Fare Week
- Sun. March 10, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers
- Mon. March 11, Beginning of Great Lent
- Mon. March 11, 6:00 p.m. Compline and Great Canon
- Tues. March 12, 6:00 p.m. Compline and Great Canon
- Wed. March 13, 8:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- Wed. March 13, 6:00 p.m. Compline and Great Canon
- Thur. March 14 6:00 p.m. Compline and Great Canon
- Fri. March 15, 6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- Fri. March 22, 6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- Sat. March 23, 4:00 p.m. Pannyhida
- Wed. March 27, 8:00 a.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- Fri. March 29, 6:00 p.m. Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- Sat. March 30, 4:00 p.m. Pannyhida

# Parish News

## **Choir Voices Needed**

All parishioners are welcome to join the choir, all voices are needed. Choir practice is held every Wednesday evening in the church at 6:30. All members of the choir should attend as many practices as possible in order to prepare for the services of the coming week. The choir is an important ministry of the church and if you can sing, you serve God by joining the choir. WE NEED YOU!

## **Weekly Tours of St. Basil's**

Tours of St. Basil's church are conducted by one of the parish clergy every Wednesday between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., and are designed to acquaint the community with the church, its architecture, traditional design, iconography, and history. No appointments are necessary and the tours will accommodate both individuals and groups. Advance notice would be appreciated for groups over 5. For additional information or to schedule a group tour contact Fr. Martin at 314-835-1569.

## **Parish Prayer List**

Reader Gennady Barabtarlo - Repose  
Nadya Danett - Health  
Archimandrite Seraphim - Recovery

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Martin to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals do not notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

## **Repose of Parishioner, Reader Gennady**

Our long time fellow parishioner, Reader Gennady Barabtarlo peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday Feb. 24th. A renowned literary scholar, author and editor of numerous books, Gennady Barabtarlo retired as Professor Emeritus last year from the University of Missouri-Columbia, where he taught Russian Studies for over 30 years. He devoted most of his scholarship to the work of Vladimir Nabokov and Aleksandr

Pushkin, and the International Vladimir Nabokov Society named its essay prize in his honor in 2019. His brilliant mind and kind and generous spirit will be deeply missed by family and friends, students and colleagues around the world.

Please keep our dear friend and fellow parishioner in your prayers and may his Memory Be Eternal.

## **Use eSCRIP and Amazon Smile Rebates**

It costs \$0 and benefits the parish. Get cards at the candle counter. Sign up for the Amazon rebate program to have a portion of your Amazon purchase donated by Amazon to the parish. Please find sign up instructions next to the stair case in the hall.

## **SERVERS WANTED!**

Boys may begin to serve in the altar at St. Basil's from the time they begin to go to Confession (usually about 9 years old). We encourage all of our boys to serve in the altar! For more information please contact Michael Orlando.

## **St. Basil's Parish Facebook Page:**

Check out <https://www.facebook.com/SaintBasiltheGreatSTLMO/> for daily edification and interesting updates. Like our Facebook Fanpage! "Like" us to have us appear in your Facebook Newsfeed.

## **Gingerbread Cookies for Sale**

Delicious, freshly baked, beautifully decorated, homemade gingerbread cookies are a great way to celebrate any special occasion. It's a great gift for your kids, relatives, friends, and co-workers. Cookies will be sold on March 3rd and March 10th to raise funds for the parish.

## **Parish Workday**

All are welcome to join a work party gathering at St. Basil's at 9:00 am on Saturday, March 30th to complete some ground keeping tasks in preparation for the Spring season.

### **Lenten Triodion Excerpt continued**

hour, and he became very hungry and wanted to eat'; and it was in this state that he fell into a trance and heard the divine voice. Such is always the purpose of ascetic fasting - to enable us, as the Triodion puts it, to 'draw near to the mountain of prayer'.

Prayer and fasting should in their turn be accompanied by almsgiving - by love for others expressed in practical form, by works of compassion and forgiveness. Eight days before the opening of the Lenten fast, on the Sunday of the Last Judgement, the appointed Gospel is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46), reminding us that the criterion in the coming judgement will not be the strictness of our fasting but the amount of help that we have given to those in need.

It is no coincidence that on the very threshold of the Great Fast, at Vespers on the Sunday of Forgiveness, there is a special ceremony of mutual reconciliation; for without love towards others there can be no genuine fast. And this love for others should not be limited to formal gestures or to sentimental feelings, but should issue in specific acts of almsgiving. Such was the firm conviction of the early Church. The second-century Shepherd of Hermas insists that the money saved through fasting is to be given to the widow, the orphan and the poor. But almsgiving means more than this. It is to give not only our money but our time, not only what we have but what we are; it is to give a part of ourselves. When we hear the Triodion speak of almsgiving, the word should almost always be taken in this deeper sense. For the mere giving of money can often be a substitute and an evasion, a way of protecting ourselves from closer personal involvement with those in distress. On the other hand, to do nothing more than offer reassuring words of advice to someone crushed by urgent material anxieties is equally an evasion of our responsibilities. Bearing in mind the unity already emphasized between man's body and his soul, we seek to offer help on both the material and the spiritual levels at once.

### **Getting to Know Our Priest: Father Radomir**

#### **Where were you born?**

*I was born in Trnavci village in Yugoslavia.*

#### **When did you become a priest?**

*I was ordained on October 16th 1954 by the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade. It was actually in one of the churches inside the building of the Patriarchate. I was ordained by then Bishop Germanos, later to be the Patriarch of the Serbian Church. I was first a priest in my hometown village, which was where I met my matushka since her uncle was the priest of our village church.*

*I was only a priest in my village for six months until the communist party drafted me into the army in order to keep me from fulfilling my role as a young Orthodox priest. They wanted to dissuade me from being a priest, but if you have faith, no one can persuade you to be a chicken.*

#### **How was your time in the army as a priest?**

*I had a very hard time. For the two years I was in the army, I was given the worst jobs in the army. I was constantly mistreated and belittled since so many communists saw my seminarian education as inferior and my vocation as a joke. I was mocked for being a priest and called "pope" as a joke in the army. One time, I was imprisoned in military jail. I had given the coordinates of a military practice to someone who lost them. I took the blame and when they sentenced me to two days in jail, I suggested they make it ten. While I was in jail, I wrote Bible verses on the wall with a nail I had found. My escort to the jail cell was amazed when he saw this because he and his family were devoted Christians. He told me, "Pope, if my father knew that I was taking a priest to jail.." and I told him so what? And told him to do his job. It felt good, but it was also upsetting to be in those conditions where I was forced to break*

my fasts. They would gather groups of other military men and ask those who believed in God to raise their hands. There were few but I knew it was because of fear that others did not raise their hands. When it came time for those against God to raise their hand, it was almost 95%. But I knew those people were really crying in their hearts because they believed in God but could not say so.

#### **Why did you want to become a priest?**

Well this was the education I received from my parents and my grandparents. Since we had so little growing up, we were taught to not worry about our earthly possessions but to seek more in heaven.

Also, my father was a Chetnik [Detachment of the Yugoslav Army leading guerilla resistance tactics during World War II sabotaging German and communist forces moving east through Serbia and Yugoslavia] under General Draža Mihailović. These men fought against communism and fought for the Serbian country, people, and Orthodox faith. They were modest and devoted Orthodox Christians. This is the history in my heart, and I wanted to be free and serve as a priest for the Orthodox faith which my father and ancestors defended.

#### **When did you come to America?**

On August 8th, 1963 there was a big earthquake in Skopje, Macedonia. Everyone was going to Macedonia to help recover from the earthquake and I took this opportunity to take the train to Belgrade, not south toward Macedonia, to deceive whoever was following me. I knew they were constantly after me, spying on me for every small movement or misspoken word I made. So I went to Belgrade and then took another train to cross the border to Greece. Not even my wife knew where I was. From there, I had help from the Russian Church Outside of Russia to complete my escape to America.

I am blessed to be in America. I was twenty eight when I escaped and now I'm eighty three so that's fifty five years I've been here. It would be an honor to die for this country tomorrow with dignity. But America is not for lazy people. I've worked hard since I've been here and I'm proud to be an Orthodox Christian in America.

#### **Why did you want to come to America?**

America was my idol and I suffered a lot under the communist party. I had to be careful with everything I said. Even my sermons in the church were reported back to the communists by spies. They would try to intimidate me and say that they knew my father was a Chetnik guerilla fighter and that my father-in-law was an enemy of the state for refusing to teach that there was no God. My father-in-law instead taught that God does exist and that without God and a spiritual life we are not human beings. He was arrested on the spot and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labour by a policeman on the street. Not even a jury was present, just two civilians. Under communism, I had to baptize so many children in secret. Even the children of communist leaders! I would arrive at the houses in the dark and baptize them by candlelight. My brother was a priest for thirty three years, and he was killed by the communists because they could not punish me since I was in America by that time.

Because of all of these hardships, I prayed to God to deliver me from that situation so that I could serve Him much better.

#### **Where have you lived in America?**

Well, I was brought to America by ROCOR Archbishop Anthony in New York. But then after nine months, I was asked to transfer to the Serbian church and support the anti-communist split of the Serbian church. The Serbian church was divided because of communist influence coming from Belgrade. We called ourselves the Free Serbian Church of America and Canada with no ties to

Belgrade until communism would be eliminated from the church. I went to Houston/Galveston for nine months where I advocated against communism. From there I went to Saint Sava monastery in Libertyville, Illinois. I was there for six months until Bishop Dionisije asked me to join him as a priest in Chicago, Illinois. I was surprised thinking, "Me? A farmers priest from Serbia/Yugoslavia, to be in Chicago?" but I was reminded that I had sworn obedience to the bishop and stayed in Chicago for two years. After two years, I was getting tired of being a city priest with so many politicians in Chicago so Bishop Dionisije transferred me to Lebanon, Pennsylvania. There was only one Orthodox church and it was under our Serbian jurisdiction. We had parishioners from everywhere attending: Greeks, Russians, Serbians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Albanians, Bulgarians, Romanians, everything. They were very disciplined and devoted people. I lived in Lebanon for four years. I transferred from Lebanon to St. George church in Racine, Wisconsin. I stayed there for four years and went to college to get my degree in human development in Psychology. I wanted the diploma as an example for my children of what you could earn if you worked hard and I did work hard. After my brother was killed in 1970, I asked the Bishop to give me some time to relax. So I went to Santa Fe, New Mexico to study Native Americans. I saw a similarity in their sufferings with what I had seen done to Serbians under communism. I was actually supposed to teach Native Americans in Albuquerque, NM, but I went to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and while I was shopping in a store, someone noticed I was an Orthodox priest and asked me to be their priest. My wife told me, "you are a priest, you should help these people in Tulsa who need a priest." So I told the people in Albuquerque that I would not be able to teach and instead was a priest for four years in Oklahoma. Then they needed a Serbian priest in St. Louis. Out of nine priests that petitioned the Bishop for that parish, I was the one accepted. I will have been here in St. Louis for forty years in two months. I've been the longest priest to stay at Holy Trinity Serbian Church in St. Louis since the church was built in 1909!

### **How did you become associated with St. Basil's?**

I have known Father Martin for many years. We met at a funeral service for Father Martin's secretary when he was at St. Louis University. I saw that Father Martin could be a good role model and could give me the strength I needed to be a good foreign priest. I saw that Father Martin was a good, devoted American and proud Orthodox Christian and I saw his Matushka Katherine as a very good woman and the best kind of matushka. What else do I need? I've been connected with St Basil's parish for almost 40 years since I first moved to St. Louis. I enjoy serving with pious, spiritual priests like Father Martin and Father Sergii. I am happy to know Father Martin and Father Sergii, as well as their Matushkas, who have been perfect examples of how good matushkas should act and behave. There are very good hard-working people here that are not only Orthodox on paper but actually lead Orthodox lives and glorify God as they should.

### **Ask Your Priest**

**Q: What traditions has the Church inherited from the Jewish practice of bringing first born sons to the temple in Jerusalem and any customs associated with this practice?**

**A: The practice associated with the fortieth day after the birth of a child (especially so of a firstborn male) in the Old Testament God-fearing community had several aspects. The most important for this short answer are the following:**

First, even with all the advances of the modern medicine today it takes several weeks for the woman to fully recover after the birth of a child. Back in the Old Testament times the period of recovery would unlikely be any shorter.

Secondly, in the Old Testament understanding a bleeding (or even a possibly bleeding) person was considered unclean and had to undergo a week-long process of ritual purification. Birth-giving was viewed in the same way -- regardless of its honorable

and holy nature -- it was viewed as a defilement of the person. Hence comes the offering of two turtledoves or two your pigeons -- one for the sin offering and another for the blood offering. After the offering, the woman was allowed back into the midst of the people and could participate in the religious life.

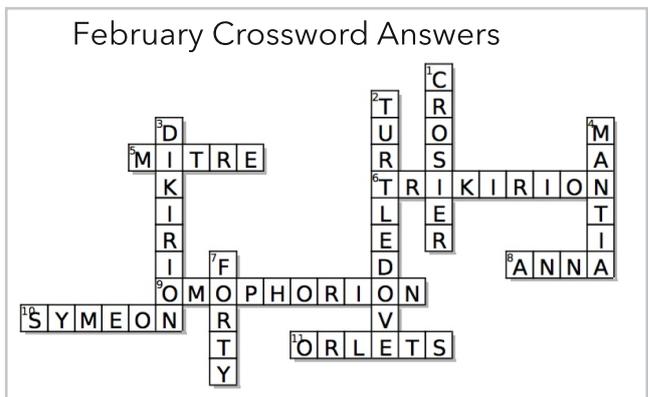
**Q:** Since Christ does not break the Old Testament Law but completes it, or makes it perfect, what parallels between the Old Testament practice and that of the New Testament Church do we see?

**A:** The Christian mother stays home for the first weeks after the child is born. The Church does not have a notion of ritual uncleanness of the mother, but gives her time to heal both physically and emotionally. As in the Old Testament, when on the fortieth day after the birth giving the mother came for the first time into the congregation of the faithful, so also now she presents herself to the Church on or around the fortieth day for the same reason. The priest reads over her prayers thanking God for preserving her through the difficult

time of pregnancy and delivery and asking Him to find her worthy of partaking of the Holy Eucharist.

Also, as in the time of the Old Testament, when the child was brought into the Temple for the first time on the fortieth day of his birth, so we now bring the child into the temple on or around the fortieth day so that he could enter the Holy Church through the mystery of Baptism.

Submit your question to  
StBasilSTLNewsletter@gmail.com



**Great Lent**

T R I U M P H O F O R T H O D O X Y K Y  
R F L I F E G I V I N G C R O S S W G R  
K M O Y E T L I C O N O C L A S M U B K  
B M A R G P D A G V L V N L W N R N R N  
G D B R G Q H K S D J Z T J X T W N Q J  
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R D E M W Y V M A Z J Y P L R N V T B M  
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O D R T O R Q S N R M E D W Y E W N Y M  
D Y Y O M R N L O E I T B G L R A M Z L  
I V W N D Y Y G J F S X H T E C V M D R  
O N V J T I G P I Z S S A E I M N Y T Z  
N L M L Y N G T A M G E S L S D E N R V  
Q Y D R T Z C A T L R J B U N Y R N Q Q  
K W P Z X N N J L G A U D A N P R V T R  
J D D P A N R G D S P M L L S D K I M Z  
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B B E R Y L Y Y T N R N G S N M E Y M N  
T R P L M L T G N W Q W V Y M R D N Y G  
P B R T N M J D B X P Y R T K V W Y D M

Answers to wordsearch to be included in April newsletter

- Publican
- Pharisee
- Prodigal Son
- Iconoclasm
- Forgiveness Sunday
- Ephraim the Syrian
- Triodion
- Great Lent
- Life Giving Cross
- Last Judgement
- Martyrs of Sebaste
- Presanctified Liturgy
- Gregory Palamas
- Triumph of Orthodoxy