

## THE NEW YEAR—REFLECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 1 IS NEW YEAR'S DAY in the Church. One might ask why we hang on to this apparently antiquated dating convention of Byzantium, when we have a perfectly good New Year's Day on January 1. Is it simply a "churchy" thing that we do— with no practical or relevant significance— when we sing a few hymns on September 1 to mark the day? There is indeed a practical and relevant difference between January 1 and September 1 for Orthodox Christians, and we should be grateful for that fact. We all know what January 1 is about, with its celebrations, resolutions and possibilities; but what about September 1?

Consider how very near the end of the Liturgical Year we celebrate the Glorious Dormition—the death— of the Mother of God, and her entry into the "Life of the Age to Come," God's Kingdom, which we will all share at the Resurrection. This is a great mystery indeed of the Lord's Mother who is already risen from the dead. These events are apparently not a matter of time, but of participation. After Dormition, we mark the feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist on August 29, another feast which illumines our understanding of death. By contrast, on September 8 near the beginning of the Liturgical New Year, we celebrate the birth of the Mother of God. The Year begins with new physical life, the Year ends with physical death. But there is a crucial difference in the Church's understanding of physical death; for the Christian, physical death means entry into Eternal Life in Christ. The Liturgical Year starts with physical birth and ends with spiritual birth, going from life to Life.

Furthermore, each month of the year, as we mark the feasts and fasts, we renew our faith and walk with Jesus Christ, joining with him, His Most Pure Mother, and His Saints, in realizing and actualizing many facets of the Christian life. The Church year teaches us that we are Temples (Entrance, Nov. 21), and that we are renewed in spiritual birth (Nativity, Dec. 25), that we are adopted as Children of God in Baptism (Theophany, Jan. 6), and more. Each profound Church feast moves us from death to life, from earth to heaven, from unworthy sinners to ac-

cepted and redeemed children, from those "who sat in darkness..." to those who "have seen a great light" (Matt. 4:16), from ignorance to the knowledge of the glory of God. So, you see, the Liturgical New Year is not an antiquated "hold over" having no value for us. It is the beginning of our walk with the Lord, in which we may personally and spiritually participate in those mighty deeds done for us by our Loving Lord.

As we begin this New Year, let us lastly not forget that it was also designated by His Holiness Patriarch Demetrios of Constantinople, and again by Patriarch Bartholomew, as the day of the "Thanksgiving for Creation." They have also proclaimed September 1st the "Day of the Protection of the Creation." His Holiness Demetrios prophetically wrote the following in the 1990s: "We invite...the entire Christian world to offer prayers and supplications to the Maker of all...as thanksgiving for the gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation. At the same time we urge all the faithful of the world to...respect and protect the natural environment." To mark this occasion, a liturgical service of thanksgiving was written and we hope to do those prayers here in our Church on Wednesday evening, September 1st.

• **New Year, New Buildings:** This Liturgical New Year we are beginning a new project at the parish as well, and we beg God's blessings upon it. Specifically, I refer to the building projects ahead: the construction of a storage building, the enlargement of our hall, and the creation of an adult baptismal font. After many years of struggling with many issues (our needs and wants, money, timing, etc.), we now have a clear vision of where we are going and how we are going to get there. Many, many people have made this possible.

Let me begin by giving thanks. First, we thank the Lord, and His Most Pure Mother. We thank His Grace, Bishop Benjamin, for blessing us and supporting us by his prayers and presence. We give thanks to our Lord for the work of our Master Planning committee, which was so expertly led by Francis Seraphim Ranney and which produced a

## INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church  
90 Mountain View Ave, Santa Rosa, CA. 95407  
Parish office phone: 584-9491 / fax: 585-9445  
website: [saintseraphim.com](http://saintseraphim.com)

Our Parish Secretary may be reached at the Church office on Tuesday–Saturday, 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491.

Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at [Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net). He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

## PARISH CONTACTS

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus .....	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Assistant Pastor .....	318-1559
Fr. John Ramos, Attached.....	570-9849
Fr. Andrew Cuneo, Assigned.....	914-255-5434
Deacon Jeremiah Crawford .....	377-4094
Deacon Nicholas Carr.....	588-8753
Sub-Deacon Marc Richardson .....	545-4047
Nicolas Custer, Choir Director .....	584-9491
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden.....	291-7452
Petar Griovski, Treasurer.....	761-4742
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary .....	778-8528
Xenia Pribyl, Sisterhood President.....	217-7630
Fr. Andrew, Church School Coordinator .....	914-255-5434
Laurel Counts, Youth Group Coordinator.....	795-5739
Scrip, Shenina .....	321-7417
Bobbi Griovski, Glendi Coordinator.....	762-4727
Julie Wycoff, Glendi Coordinator .....	486-6710

document and drawings of the property to which we constantly refer. We are grateful for the work of John Hunter, a wonderful architect and gem of a man, who helped us throughout the process, and who did not charge us one cent for his magnificent work. We are also grateful for Andrew Gould, our country's most traditional and talented Orthodox designer and architect, for his contributions towards further development of the Master Plan. We hired Andrew Gould based on his previous work and reputation, once John was unable to continue with us due to work demands. Because of his vast knowledge and aesthetic understanding, Andrew has helped us to look at the whole property in a new way.

Additionally, we are very, very grateful for the generous, truly more than generous, contributions of those who have made our projects possible: the steady, loving, and sacrificial offerings of the members of our blessed Parish is the foundation; we are grateful for the extraordinary offering that was given to the parish to pay the mortgage a year and a half ago; we are grateful to the late Sarah Rohrmann, who left a substantial bequest to the Parish for the purpose of enlarging the hall and building a storage facility; to the late Nick and Olga Belenkoff, who dreamt of a new forecourt in front of St. Seraphim, and left funds to pay for most of it. May their memories be eternal. We are grateful to the Parish Council Members, present and past, that have been involved and care so deeply for the hallowed grounds of this place, to maintain its beauty, and to develop it into a garden of the Theotokos. We are grateful that amid all this work to expand and improve our facilities, we are still able to provide charitable funds for the needy (last year \$25,000 was given).

What is the vision for the coming projects? The new storage building, something we desperately need, will be located on the east side of the property, in the place of our dilapidated red storage shed. It will be a building of about 2200 square feet. Having a prominent position on the grounds, it

must be not only a utilitarian structure, but also a beautiful building to look at. Andrew Gould is designing this building and our new architect, Mr. Robert Leys, based in Cotati, will manage the process (see his wonderful website, [robertleysarchitects.com](http://robertleysarchitects.com)). Having Andrew do the first part of the job elevates the entire process, to be sure. One can see this readily by looking at his work on his website ([newworldbyzantine.com](http://newworldbyzantine.com)). Robert, a formidable and talented architect in his own right, is now designing the enlargement of our Hall with an eye to harmonizing the building with the storage facility. Preliminary drawings for these buildings will be presented to the Parish as soon as possible. One of the most exciting elements of the enlarged hall is a full-size (and partially covered) porch which will open off the Hall where the playground now is. The new hall will also boast a relocated and enlarged kitchen. The lawn will be graded, new playground equipment installed (with your pledges) and no detail is being overlooked. It's all very exciting, and I am eager to share it all with each one of you. Finally, as we begin this new two-year project, it is important that we reflect on what happens to our community during this process. We are somewhat used to the physical discombobulation and disorder in the temple due to the plastering two years ago and the icon painting going on now and for the next five years or

so. There will be more of this, for a limited time, in the Hall, and areas around it, making life difficult and uncomfortable for those who live here. Please be generous, kind, understanding and helpful to our residents during this process as they deal with the inconvenience. Expect them to be struggling with patience and so help them endure.

What is more important, I want to reflect on what can naturally happen to the best of parish members during the design and building process. There are good things that can occur, very good things, and some rather unfortunate things as well, that can occur, but do not have to occur. I write this from my experience. Over the last twenty-five years we in this parish have worked on an incredible number of projects: the enlargement of the Protection Church (and we rejected that idea); the design of a basilica-style new church (rejected); the design and building of a domed cross-in-square Byzantine style church; a full iconographic plan; the construction of the icon screen; the repair and replacement of the church dome; the plastering of the entire interior of the Church; the coloring of the floor. We installed a solar panel system – took up too much of the parking with it – moved panels, rewired the system, and fenced it all in. We partially landscaped the west parking lot; we came together to form a Master Plan team; we struggled with deciding to build a new hall or enlarge the old. We discussed, and rejected, the plans for the building of a handicap ramp on the Protection Church; we designed and built a forecourt in front of St. Seraphim; and now, we are designing and, very soon, building a new storage building and enlarging our Hall, not to mention that landscaping that goes with it.

I list all of these projects (and there were more: renovation of bathrooms and such!) because with each of them, some of our beloved members, experienced pain, frustration, resentments and misunderstandings. During almost every one of these projects someone among us went away, at some point, rather disappointed or hurt – sometimes it was me causing the offense, sometimes others. Some returned to resolve the issue, some went away, done with the “whole thing.” Thank goodness that it does not have to be this way, and we learn from the past even as we pray for the future. Let us daily ask the Lord to bless all our decisions, discussions,

interactions, and expenses! Let us stay united in prayer together, forgiving one another, eager to maintain the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” as St. Paul puts it in *Ephesians*. Let us avoid the “taking of offenses” since this particular sin sends roots deeply into our wounded heart quickly and they are not easily extracted. Let us love one another, that with one heart and mouth we can honor the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We should remember that God allows struggles, obstacles and suffering to come our way, not because He is eager to watch us suffer, but so that through our fidelity and trust in Him, He may confer upon us mercy, love, power and holiness. Each time there is a problem before us, the Lord is also sending the strength we need to be victorious in Him. Each time we are insulted, or disappointed, or feel disrespected or humbled by someone – and I have been more guilty, truly, of these sins against others than anyone else here – understand that our Merciful Savior is also sending us the power to forgive and be restored to one another. “Don’t sweat the small stuff,” as one of our parishioners tells me now and then.

As we begin the Liturgical New Year, looking forward to prayerful spiritual transformation in Christ by participation in the feasts and fasts, the Liturgies and the Vigils of the year, let us resolve to keep the spiritual “by-laws” of the Faith written by St. Paul (Rom. 9:12) which we heard in church a month and a half ago:

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.”

– Fr. Lawrence

## Parish Council Meeting Minutes – Thursday, July 15, 2010

We began with prayer at 7:05 PM. Attending: Fr. Lawrence Margitich, Serge Anderson, Bonnie Alexander, Lew Baer, Debbie Buse, Petar Griovski, Ole Kern, Joseph Marino, Denise Pellizzer, Xenia Pribyl (Sisterhood President) and Subdeacon Marc Richardson. Absent: Nick Nicholson and Dee Skikos.

1. Minutes: June 10, 2010 minutes were accepted as submitted.
2. Rector's Report: (a) The Summer Camp is a valuable resource in our Deanery as it knits the youth together with the Orthodox faith at the center; we need to encourage participation. (b) Fr. Andrew is here now to begin his internship. He will be filling in at Berkeley again next Sunday.
3. Treasurers' Report: (a) Expenses to point out: (1) \$6000 for frescoes; (2) Sent \$4000 to diocese as part of Fr. Andrew's stipend, as approved earlier; (3) Rectory repairs to bathrooms (\$2700 and \$1051).
4. Church Building Projects/Status: Install exhaust fan by censer in Altar; Waterproof area around altar window, north side, 2nd story; Look for nice concrete benches for the Forecourt – Denise Pellizzer
5. Grounds and Facilities Report: Building Maintenance list (Immediate and future maintenance projects): Rectory Roof – (need additional bids, for next year); Domes for Protection bell tower, main dome & cross – will be installed by Glendi (Serge); Additional Security Cameras around St. Seraphim: Fr. Lawrence is working on this; Install alarm at Bells: Fr. Lawrence is working on this. Tree replacement by Landscaping Company Drip system is now working.
6. Old Business: (a) Master Plan projects – Storage and Adjacent Projects – we had hoped to be much farther along on this project than we are. We are going to pursue other resources to get the project done. The timing is good to move forward. Serge will meet with an architectural firm on Monday. Motion: To contact and hire an architect for the project. **M/S/C: Lew Baer/Petar Griovski.** (b) Play Area – nearing the end of its life-span and needs to be moved to fit in with the new project. Serge proposes that we ask the families with children to participate in design, maintaining and paying for the new play area. Fr. Lawrence will contact families and ask for pledges, to be fulfilled by end of spring. (c) Orthodox Cemetery. The committee visited the area and it is beautiful. The management have consulted an engineer about combining the two locales with potential for 1000 graves. Fr. Lawrence will talk to other priests about participating. Someone on the Council needs to take the helm of this project. The diagram is being redone and will be sent to Subdn. Marc when it is finished. Next step: Subdn. Marc will work with Fr. Lawrence and Denise to investigate further. Lew Baer and Joe Marino will participate in any negotiations that might take place. (d) Glendi organization: Fr. Lawrence feels encouraged by what has been filled in on the organizational chart. We need an advertising chair and a parking chair. We don't have an overall Glendi Chair at the moment. Discussion of reducing admission and instigating a family rate. (e) St. Seraphim Week has been a great success. There were about 20 children participating and they had a great time. Our thanks to Lara Anderson and the crew that participated so enthusiastically.
7. New Business: (a) St. Seraphim Day: Greeting with Bread and Salt, honoraria. Sisterhood is decorating the hall for the lunch on Monday. (b) Church Ushers – We have a policy that people who are acting "strangely" in church are to be approached by an usher. If they don't cooperate, get another usher. If no cooperation then, call the Sheriff. We need to formalize the roll of usher. (c) Baptismal Font – Fr. Lawrence is working on a permanent outdoor adult baptismal font. (d) 75th Anniversary of the Parish – October 1, 2011. Mat. Esther Carr is heading this up. We are requesting that the Metropolitan attend.
8. Next meeting will be Thursday, August 19, 2010. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

**THE FEAST DAY OF OUR PARISH** is October 1, the day of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary. We will serve the Vigil on Thursday, September 30 at 6:30 PM, and the Divine Liturgy on Friday, October 1 at 9:30 AM. Of course the Glendi is an important event for our parish, but not nearly as important as the founding Feast of this holy church. So find time to enjoy the feast too.

## STEWARDSHIP & PLEDGING

### Some Questions and Answers

1. *What does the term "Christian Stewardship" mean to you?*

- "Christian Stewardship" is nothing less than God's call for us as His people to assist in managing the affairs of this earth with Him. We are called to be "friends of the bridegroom" and "coworkers with the Lord." Our Stewardship consists of making responsible decisions about our time, health, talents, relationships, property, and all that makes up our lives.

2. *In the context of "Christian Stewardship" what does the term "Financial Stewardship" mean to you?*

- "Financial Stewardship" means the responsible making of decisions about the money we have, in the light of our high calling to "do God's will in our lives." "Financial Stewardship" requires that we return part of our money to God in support of the work of His Church, and then that we manage the rest wisely.

3. *In your opinion, is there a difference between "Fundraising" and "Christian Financial Stewardship?"*

- "Fundraising" has as its primary goal the raising of money. "Christian Financial Stewardship" has

as its primary goal the giving of opportunities for making financial decisions and commitments. The actual raising of money is a secondary goal!



4. *In the context of "Christian Financial Stewardship," what does the term "First-Portion Giving" mean to you?*

- "First Portion Giving" means just that: to consciously return a first part of our income to God, in a systematic way, in support of the work of His church as an act of gratitude, and then to consciously make wise decisions concerning how we should manage the remainder of our income.

5. *In the context of "Christian Financial Stewardship," what does the term "Percentage Giving" mean to you?*

- "Percentage Giving" means to determine what part of our total income we will give as our "First Portion Gift" to God in support of the work of His church, as an act of gratitude and thanks for all He has done and continues to do for us and for the life of the world.

6. *In the context of "Christian Financial Stewardship," what does the term "Pledging" mean to you?*

- "Pledging" is the making of a Commitment concerning our "First Portion Percentage" Gift.

---

## ON OVERCOMING ANGER

A brother asked Abba Isidore the priest, "Why are the demons so frightened of you?" The old man said to him, "Because, ever since the day I began practicing asceticism, I have striven to prevent anger from reaching my lips. — *The Desert Fathers*

Anger is by nature designed for waging war with the demons and for struggling with every kind of sinful pleasure. Therefore angels, arousing spiritual pleasure in us and giving us to taste its blessedness, incline us to direct our anger against the demons. But the demons, enticing us towards worldly lusts, make us use anger to fight with men, which is against nature, so that the mind, thus stupefied and darkened, should become a traitor to virtues. — *Abba Evagrius the Monk (Texts on Active Life no. 15)*

As with the appearance of light, darkness retreats; so, at the fragrance of humility, all anger and bitterness vanishes. — *St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent*