



HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH Parish Newsletter

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA February 2016

FEBRUARY—DAY 11 HOURS, NIGHT 13

- 2 Mon ↓ ENCOUNTER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST [40TH DAY]
 6 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 7 Sun^{36•II•Lk20} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Tarasova**
Followed by our Annual Parish Business Meeting.
 13 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 14 Sun^{37•III•Lk21} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Warden**
 20 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
BEGINS THE TRIODION (WHICH ENDS WITH PENTECOST)
 21 Sun^{38•IV•Lk22} **GOSPEL: A MAN WHO NEEDS GOD vs. ONE WHO DOESN'T** (Luke 18.9+)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Wayland**
 27 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 28 Sun^{39•V•Lk23} **GOSPEL: WAYWARD SONS, LOVING FATHER** (Luke 15.11+)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Williams**
MARCH—DAY 12 HOURS, NIGHT 12
 5 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 6 Sun^{40•VI•Lk24} **GOSPEL: JUDGMENT—BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT REACH OUT** (Mat. 25.31+)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Adams**
 12 Sat 5:00 p.m. Vespers
 13 Sun^{41•VII•Lk25} **GOSPEL: FORGIVENESS—LETTING GO** (Mat. 6.14+)
 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Belinsky**
 5:00 p.m. Penitential Vespers, followed by *Bliny* and all the fixings.
 14 Mon *Day 1—Begin THE GREAT FORTY DAYS.*

Annual Meeting.

We hold our Annual Business Meeting this year on the announced snow-date, Sunday, 7 February. Yes, it's also Super Bowl Sunday, so we will make every effort to keep our meeting from dragging on. There will be the usual financial reports and approval of a budget for the year; we will elect three to the parish council, and make some decisions about the future. [We also need to discuss how we can mark the Holy Week and Pasch this year; but we can do that, perhaps, at Dessert with Father Paul.] So plan on attending. Our gathering will not be complete without you.

The Poot on 2016

The cat's probably already out of the bag; the Holy Pasch comes late this year.

The Triodion begins on Sunday, February 21 (Father George will be serving that Sunday). The Great Forty Days begin on March 14 (just a week before the Western Church's Holy Week!—their Resurrection Sunday being March 27). The Lord's Entry into Jerusalem falls on the last Sunday in April, the 24th, and a week later, on May 1, Resurrection Sunday.

A lot of ink has been spent—wasted, one might say—on the Julian calendar and the computation of the

RENEWAL DESCRIBED: The return to the liturgical life as the very focus of the parish, as the means of its respiration and revitalization. Parish life again begins to be centered on the Eucharist and the sacraments, on liturgical cycles. The Church begins again to be experienced as the Body of Christ. This process inevitably raises new questions, creates new difficulties.... Yet at least the motivations, the zeal, the intentions are pastoral, aimed at priceless human souls and their communion with God. It is in such parishes that the statutes are not opposed, all financial obligations are gladly met... confident and truly loving relations with the Bishop established and nurtured. It would not be difficult to prove that this renewal is rooted in a genuine interest in the true Orthodox Tradition, in the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, the Liturgy, and above all in a deep concern for the *religious* and not merely "ethnic" or "social" orientation of the Church.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann,
Theophany, 1973

Holy Pasch, which is, in point of fact, a three-day affair.

The truth of the matter is that the computation of the date of the Pasch has nothing to do with the Julian computation as such. The Gregorian, or every-day calendar, would work just as well. And the reason for this is simple: according to tradition in the Christian East, the holy Pasch must always *follow* the biblical Pasch, what English-speaking Jews call Passover. According to Scripture the biblical Pasch begins at sundown on the 14th of Nisan, when the full moon makes its appearance (Leviticus 23). This year the 14th of Nisan falls on Gregorian April 22 (Julian April 9). This is a Friday. And since our Friday, Saturday, Sunday Pasch must *follow* the biblical Pasch—what our books call the Pasch of the Law—our Pasch begins on the following Friday, April 29.

And Christmas falls on a Sunday.



As our Russian source puts it, Syrian leader Bashar Asad and his wife Asma visited the Dormition Cathedral in Damascus on 19 December last: "They attended Vespers, heard the church choir, and visited with the singers and parishioners." Orthodox Church leaders in Syria have made it quite clear that they do not share the American assessment of Asad.





Church of the Dormition in Damascus, the oldest functioning church in Syria, is the burial place of the Patriarchs of Antioch. Built upon foundations that trace back to the second century, it has known destruction by earthquake, fire, the wrath of kaliphs, and invading Mongols—grounds for hope that it will survive the civil war there.



We give here a brilliant piece by a respected OCA pastor—the only piece to rise above the uninspiring drivel composed in response to the pre-Atlanta Council question posed by the OCA Front Office: How to expand the Mission?

The thinking here rests on the intellectual foundations laid by Father Alexander Schmemmann and Father John Meyendorff of blessed memory. In our view each of them would grade this paper A+.

The Editor here would entitle the piece “Message Fallen on Deaf Ears”—a tad more descriptive of the church-at-large’s response. But we defer to the author.

HOW TO EXPAND THE MISSION

The 18th All American Council Atlanta, Georgia
by Father Robert M. Arida

I

The 18th All American Council bases its overall theme on the words of Saint Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow. During his ministry in North America (1898–1907) the then Archbishop Tikhon convened the First All American Council in Mayfield, Pennsylvania in February of 1907. This council, perhaps the last significant and prophetic act of Archbishop Tikhon’s North American ministry, recognized not only the difficulties but also the many opportunities for the Church to carry out the missionary mandate of the Gospel. Based on the minutes recorded by Saint Alexander Hotovitsky, the vision of the 1907 council looked towards the future. For Archbishop Tikhon “the defining goal of the Council was the question of ‘How To Expand The Mission’ in order to prepare the way for self-governing, unsubordinated existence and development” in North America. Clearly the Mayfield Council understood expanding the mission to include the unity of the various ethnic Orthodox communities within a united hierarchy and the future establishment of an autonomous if not autocephalous Church in North America. That the Russian Revolution of 1917 together with the large waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean delayed Orthodox unity in America and the establishment of a self governing local Church, the Mayfield Council still remains an important sign post in the history of Orthodoxy in America. It stands upon the vision and labors of missionaries extending back to late 18th century Alaska and points to the granting of autocephaly by the Moscow patriarchate in 1970. This organic development leading to the establishment of the Orthodox Church in America serves to remind us that our autocephaly is a sacred gift that is given to sustain a multifaceted, multi-ethnic demographic bound by hierarchical and sacramental unity. Though our autocephaly continues to challenge the irregular and uncanonical *status*

quo of jurisdictional pluralism and overlapping episcopal boundaries, the Mayfield Council provides us with the moral support to stay the course of a local Church. Gathered around Saint Tikhon, the Mayfield Council stands as a humble and courageous paradigm to be emulated by those who will gather in Atlanta in July of 2015.

Just as world events at the beginning of the 20th century radically changed ecclesial life here and abroad, our Church in America—poor and mainly comprised of immigrants—continued the struggle to carry on and to expand its mission in and for America. Similarly, as the Church will gather in council in 2015, one can only hope that it will seek ways to implement a vision for ‘expanding the mission’ when life here and abroad have placed before its doors unprecedented challenges as well as new opportunities to respond to the ever changing culture(s) of our time. But for this to occur, the Atlanta Council will need to consider other ways to understand Saint Tikhon’s vision of “how to expand the mission.”

II

If “how to expand the Church’s mission” is to be perceived as more than the development of commissions and programs to bolster membership and revenue and if the Church is to have a credible presence in our culture, offering it more than **a condemning word couched in the language of love** [*what an interesting pointed turn of phrase*—Ed.] then it is necessary for the Church to expand its mind and heart.

The task is formidable for it demands a reassessment of how to speak and act in a culture that, while infused with religious pluralism, continues to turn a critical eye towards Christianity. By no means is the Orthodox Church in America spared this public scrutiny. In spite of our small numbers, **our Church has assumed a noticeable posture in the public square that varies little from that of Christian fundamentalists. Consequently the biblical, patristic and liturgical pillars of our tradition are being toppled by a hermeneutic that precludes dialog, nuance and change. Should this closed hermeneutic—which has made its way to seminary classrooms, parish ambobos and synodal proclamations—continue to spread, the Church will steadily lose its ability to listen and respond to the questions of the day. If the Church is to stem the polarity of ideas and opinions growing within itself and if it is to be the presence of Christ in society then it can no longer allow its mission to be impeded by fear and ignorance.** [*Emphasis our*—Ed.]

Within and outside of the Church, questions are being raised relative to issues that were once considered, from a theological and pastoral perspective, outside the realm of re-examination and re-evaluation. No longer can the Church expect its faithful and the wider public to accept its decrees, exhortations and admonitions that often ignore

sophisticated and refined theological scholarship, science and technology. If the Church is to “expand its mission” it can no longer turn away from, ignore or condemn questions and issues that are a priori presumed to contradict or challenge its living tradition. Among the most controversial of these issues are those related to human sexuality, the configuration of the family, the beginning and ending of human life, and care for the environment. If the Church is to “expand its mission” then, in and through the Holy Spirit, it must be able to expand the understanding of itself and of the world it lives in. The ministry of Christ who is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 8.13) cannot and has not been proclaimed by only resorting to what has been said in the past. So long as the mind and heart of the Church accept the fiction that all questions pertaining to God, human life and society have been raised and answered in the past there can be no possibility to expand its life and mission. More specifically, when the Church is oriented only to the past it cannot be the Church of the Kingdom which is to come.

III

If the Church is to expand its mind and heart then each of its members—clergy and laity—is compelled to expand his/her mind and heart. Unless there is a renewal of those comprising the Church the Church’s very catholicity, *i.e.*, its quality of life and faith are jeopardized inasmuch as those called to have “one mind and heart” cease to allow the Truth to grow within themselves.

Often the inability to grow in the Truth leads to a course of mutual exclusion and division. A closed mind and hardened heart cannot repent and ultimately prevent a union and communion of persons. A closed mind and heart also lead to a type of faith that is bereft of divine energy and life. This, in turn, creates an ecclesial environment that is myopic, oppressive, fearful and self contained—the very antithesis to catholicity. “The human aspect of the Church is never fully conformed to the divine model. The Church must not cease to make itself catholic. But this is possible only because it is essentially catholic in its Lord.... The main problem to resolve is always that of recreating the catholic and full mind.... “

Without an ongoing process of repentance among its faithful the Church will be unable to articulate the “mind

of Christ” here and now. This bold concept of Saint Paul, “we have the mind of Christ,” (1 Corinthians 2.16) can easily be misconstrued now as it was among some of the Corinthian Christians of the first century. To possess the mind of Christ is not to be understood as a static mode of consciousness that can only repeat what was said in the past. The mind of Christ is inexhaustible and therefore human consciousness and awareness are eternally dynamic, ever expanding, ever extending into the divine mystery. “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (Ephesians 3.15) With the expansion of the Church’s mind and heart what is of the past can be augmented. Consequently,

[1] Holy Scripture can continue to be interpreted and *clarified*.

[2] Patristic writings can continue to be re-assessed and even *corrected*.

[3] Liturgical texts can continue to *be composed* while existing texts can be *revised*.

With the expanded mind and heart of the Church the ministry of Christ will be able to expand through the creative operation of the Holy Spirit. This will allow the Church to maintain its authentic voice, the voice of Christ, as it expands its mission for the life of the world and its salvation.

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Father Arida touches upon a number of thorny—avoid-at-all-cost—issues. With so many not-so-former Protestants joining our communities as deacons, priests, and bishops—a good number with no theological education (e.g., Antioch’s Evangelicals, OCA’s Holy Order of Mans)—as teachers, columnists, op-ed page writers, bible authorities, book publishers, and broadcasters, there is this fog descending upon Orthodoxy in America, a pseudo-Americanism, if you will, that suggests we should become a sort of generic Protestant latinóphron or Latin-minded church body, with what Sister Vassa and others are calling the “Byzantine Rite.” When the late Archbishop Philip called Orthodoxy “America’s best kept secret,” I do not think this is what he had in mind.—Ed.