

PARISH NEWS AND EVENTS
February 28, 2010

More news and events...

No Presanctified Liturgy this Week

Due to the Metropolis Clergy and Presbyteres retreat, there will be no services on Wednesday evening.

Lenten Pot Luck Dinners

Please join us for a pot luck supper following Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesday evenings. Just bring a Lenten dish to share in the buffet room

Hall Floor Refinishing

The gym floor refinishing began on February 22 and the hall will be inaccessible for use until March 5.

Flower Donations for Salutation Services

We are in need for donations for two flower arrangements that will adorn the icon of the Theotokos each Friday evening during Great Lent as we gather and chant the beautiful Salutation services. The cost for each vase is \$35.00. Please call the office or stop by with your donation.

Lenten Retreat with Fr. Thomas Hopko

Friday and Saturday, March 12 and 13, Fr. Thomas Hopko will lead a retreat at St. Matthew Orthodox Church, 10383 Albion Road, North Royalton, OH. His topic is "Why a Suffering Messiah?" The cost is \$20.00. For more information or registration call St. Matthew at 440-582-5673. The first session will begin on Friday following the Akathist Service at 6:30 pm.

Parish Appreciation Luncheon

The GOYA will be sponsoring a Parish Appreciation Luncheon on March 7th after Divine Liturgy. Cost: FREE. Please RSVP with the representative at the GOYA table at Coffee Hour today. **This is the last day to sign up.**

Philoptochos Pastry Workshops

Join us for fun and fellowship at the upcoming pastry workshops at 9:00 am:

Finikia Workshop, Wednesday, March 3
Spanakopita & Tiropita Workshop, Saturday, March 6
Kourambeithes Workshop, Monday, March 8
Baklava Workshop, Friday, March 19



Lenten Retreat

On Saturday, March 6, 2010, Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Cleveland Heights will host a Lenten Retreat from 8:30-4:00 pm with retreat leader Dr. Peter Kalellis. The registration fee, which includes a Lenten breakfast and lunch, is \$15.00. (\$20.00 after February 28th) For more information, call 216-932-3300.

Fish Fry

Enjoy a delicious fish dinner, butterfly shrimp or chicken tenders the following Fridays, March 5, 12, 19, and 26 from 5:00-7:00 pm. There is something for everyone!

Receive the Voice via Website

Don't forget that our **Parish Website**, www.AnnunciationAkron.org has great resources available, including the Sunday Sermon, if you want to hear it again (or *if you missed it the first time*), the Sunday Bulletin (which is usually posted before you receive it, either on Friday or Saturday), the monthly Voice (usually online 2 weeks before you get it via mail), Youth News and Notes (GOYA, JOY, Altar Boys, etc.), and more!

Quilts

Join us for fun and fellowship for our next quilting session on Tuesday, March 16 at 9 a.m.

Men's Club

Men's Club Golf League starts April 22 at 5:00 pm at Good Park Golf Course. The cost is \$65 per year plus \$5 to join Men's Club. You play for 22 weeks. To join, call Chris Cherpas (330-836-2621) or Larry Poulos (330-864-6898) by April 1. They are looking for regulars and substitutes.

Lenten Reading - an article by Fr. Stephen Callos

Fr. Peter and I take the opportunity to periodically visit Orthodox Education classes and do "Q & A" with the students. We both enjoy it tremendously, and it enables us to hear what young people are thinking. Recently a teacher asked her students, "How many of you are bored in church?" Every child raised his/her hand. It does not surprise me that children and even adults may find church boring. I myself have had to deal with this over time.

Does this surprise you? Services are often repetitive; the messages are occasionally difficult; the language is sometimes difficult to understand. The teacher who conveyed this story to me responded to the class by offering coping strategies, ways to overcome the boredom.

They were good strategies, but I prefer to begin with this response: you have to face the fact that boredom is part of the challenge that we all face. We can blame this or that aspect of the service, and there may be some truth to the critique, but above all, we need to recognize that we are children of God who are challenged by our "fallen nature," meaning that we were created to be perfect and in perfect fellowship with God, but that the millennia of human experience has brought us to be less than perfect.

There is an insightful hymn in our church services that says, "Often while I am chanting, I find myself sinning. With my tongue I am singing praises, with my soul I am thinking unseemly things." The very fact that this hymn is part of our worship service indicates something very important: that even the saints struggle with boredom and distractions during worship. Most people who practice prayer on a daily basis have this challenge.

The challenge today is that young and old have so much stimulation in life that they view boredom as something to run away from rather than confronting it. And so they come late to church or avoid church or they come and they blame the tradition, when what should be done is to acknowledge that growing close to God requires effort. I think that this is what the Lord meant when He said, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

Great Lent begins on February 15, and it offers us a multitude of opportunities for getting bored. We have services on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in addition to Sundays and some Saturdays. I ask you to take the opportunity to face your boredom and work your way through it. This is not always easy, but it can be quite rewarding. Some people exercise using a treadmill or an elliptical machine; others run or jog; I swim laps at a nearby swimming pool. All of these are boring, and believe me, I never go to the pool thinking, "Wow! I'm so happy to do this." But most of us who do these repetitive, boring exercises know that when we are done, we feel great.

Coping strategies:

- (1) learn what the services and rituals mean;
- (2) sing along with the chanter or choir;
- (3) read along with the priest if there is an available service book;
- (4) just sit there and ask God to help you grow closer to Him.

The Lord once said, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Finding God in your heart is a joyous opportunity, but it was not meant to be without effort. Great Lent is essentially a time when we make an extra effort, when we go out of our way to take initiatives, to voluntarily assume struggles that lead us closer to God. May your Lent be a blessed one.