

Magnificat

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Lent/Pascha
2003

**With joy let us begin the time of this bright Fast,
and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat.
Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh.
Let us not fast only from food;
let us also abstain from every passion.
Rejoicing in spiritual virtues,
let us persevere with love,
so that we may be counted worthy
to see the holy Passion of Christ our God
and exult in His holy Resurrection.**

From the Vespers of Forgiveness

We are a Catholic Monastery of the Byzantine Rite, under the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Chicago, and belonging to the Ukrainian Metropolis in the United States of America, which is in union with the Pope of Rome, supreme pastor of the universal Church. We embrace Evangelical poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability of life, according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the traditions of the Christian East. In our skete at Jacob's Falls, on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, we devote ourselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

The Prayer of St. Ephrem

Lenten prayer of the Byzantine tradition

O Lord and Master of my life,
dispel from me
the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness,
ambition and vain talk.

But rather, grant to me, your servant,
the spirit of purity and lowliness,
of patience and brotherly love.

O Lord and King,
make me aware of my own faults
and not to judge my brother,
for You are blessed, now and forever.

Amen.

The Long Journey to Pascha ³

The Paschal Mystery is the heart of the Christian Faith. Through the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ, the bonds of sin and death are broken, and we, who had been dead because of sin, are restored to life; the divine image in which we had been created, but which we had obscured through sin, is revealed once more, and we are returned to our original state of blessedness and, indeed, offered a share in divine life. Before the greatness of such a gift, the Christian can only experience a profound, reverential, awe-filled, and ecstatic joy.

This Easter joy finds vigorous expression in the Byzantine liturgical tradition. Pascha is the pivot point of the entire liturgical year. With it, the eight week cycle of tones begins anew; its joyous celebration is prolonged for seven weeks, culminating in the great feast of Pentecost (the fiftieth day); and, from this point, all the subsequent Sundays of the year – each one of them, in itself, a celebration of the Resurrection – are numbered. Paschal joy suffuses the entire year and fills all the Church's celebrations with its light.

The greatness of the joy and the magnitude of the mystery require intense preparation. Thus, the seven week feast of Easter is preceded by seven weeks of fasting – the forty day Great Fast of Lent (six weeks) and the even more severe fast of Holy Week. The fasting is rigorous. Meat, fish, eggs, and dairy are excluded from the diet, along with oil and wine, and, during the week, only one meal per day is taken – in the evening, after Vespers. On Saturday and Sunday – in thanksgiving for the original goodness of Creation and for its wondrous restoration in the Resurrection – the fast is relaxed somewhat; more than one meal is permitted, and wine and oil may be used.

The Fast is not an end in itself, some sort of disciplinary exercise to be accomplished through our own efforts for the sake of its challenge. (Indeed, the prayers throughout the season beg God for the grace of completing the Fast.) Nor – although the Lenten texts are fond of reminding us that the first sin was one of gluttony, as well as

one of disobedience – is meant to imply that food and drink, the good things of the earth, placed here for our survival and growth, are somehow to be disdained. Rather, fasting is an external aid to the interior disposition necessary for a right understanding and a worthy celebration of our redemption.

Moses (Ex. 34: 28) was given the Law during a fast of forty days; Elijah (1Kgs. 19:8) fasted forty days on his journey to the mountain of God; and the Lord Jesus (cf. Mt. 4:1-11; Lk.4:1-13) fasted forty days in the desert before undertaking His public ministry. Thus, we also fast forty days on our journey to Holy Week, that our minds and hearts may be free of the clutter of sinful attachments as we relive the events through which our redemption was won. But our fasting cannot be merely external; it must always mirror a true inner purification and conversion.

Already, during the three weeks before the beginning of the Fast, the Gospel readings for the Sunday Divine Liturgy lay before us the dynamics that mark this purification. The parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Lk. 18:10-14) teaches us that humility and repentance, not pride in our observance, will bring about our justification. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) illustrates the love with which God receives us back into His house whenever we turn to Him in true repentance. Jesus' vivid description the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) reminds us of the eternal consequences, for good or ill, that flow from our actions toward one another in this life.

These themes are reiterated and elaborated in the poetic texts of the Divine Office for their respective Sundays, and they will be constantly recalled as their imagery reappears in the texts of the Office throughout Lent and, indeed into Holy Week.

The Gospel reading (Mt. 6:14-21) for the Sunday immediately preceding Lent – Forgiveness Sunday – takes a more direct approach: if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven; we

must not fast merely for the sake of outward show; we must lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven rather than here on earth, for where we place our treasure, there we will set our hearts. These are sure precepts for safely traversing the Great Fast which will begin that evening at the Vespers of Forgiveness; together with the *Prayer of St. Ephrem*, which we will recite at each Lenten Office for the next forty days, they provide the guidelines for the spiritual conversion that must accompany our bodily fasting. But it is the image invoked by the Office of that Sunday immediately before Lent that best typifies the experience of the Great Fast in the Byzantine tradition.

Adam weeping over the loss of his original state of blessedness is a universal symbol of the human condition. Through his sinfulness, man has exiled himself from communion with God. The ills and hardships that plague our lives originate in our disobedience and rebellion, individually and collectively, against the will of God. Though we have been created in God's image and likeness, death has entered our world because of sin, and we are excluded from the eternal blessings which God had originally intended for us. We see the evidence of our wretchedness all around us, and, even in our day, death seems to have our world in its grip more and more.

As Christians, we know that the barrier separating us from Paradise has been shattered by the Passion, death and Resurrection of Christ. Through His death, our bonds of sin and death have been loosed, and we are enabled to attain a share in Divine Life. The true magnitude of the gift is beyond our power to comprehend, and it is easy, in the midst of our sins and woes, to be unappreciative of the blessing; often, because of our sinfulness, we fail to reach out and accept it; caught up in our daily cares we can forget that we are in exile, that this fallen world is not our true home.

For the Byzantine Christian, Lent is a forceful reminder of the exile our sins force upon us. The music of the long somber Services is mournful, the poetic texts speak often of our sinfulness

and its disastrous consequences; the prayer of the Publican, "O Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner" is a constant refrain throughout the season. Much of the time we are even denied the ordinary blessings that flow from Christ's presence among us: on the week days, Divine Liturgy is not celebrated, and, although references to the Gospel abound in the poetic texts, we do not read the New Testament itself in the Services; hearing only Genesis, Proverbs, and Isaiah, we are immersed in a time without Christ. We feel ourselves, like the Children of Israel, wandering in the desert, with the emptiness broken only by the "oases" of Saturday and Sunday when Divine Liturgy is celebrated..

Our fasting reminds us of the Prodigal Son, deprived of food and hungry for the blessings of his father's house. Food may satisfy our physical cravings, but until we break loose from our slavery to sin and return home to God, we will remain spiritually starving. Like the Prodigal longing to return to his father's house, we hunger with Adam for the Paradise which had been our original home.

Praise God for His many mercies! Through Christ we can gain Paradise again. Through His death, He has re-opened the way for us and has raised us out of the grave of our sinfulness. In the light of His Resurrection all things are made new, and our sorry world is filled with joy.

We keep the Great Fast with joy, therefore. With the *Prayer of St. Ephrem* on our lips and the prayer of the Publican in our hearts, we pass our long desert pilgrimage with increasing strength. For it leads us to the sublime mysteries of Holy Week and to the jubilant shout: **Christ is Risen!**

God grant that we may keep the Fast worthily, so as to understand the greatness of what He has done for us. At the end of the course, may He fill us to overflowing with Paschal joy.

**Banished from the joys of Paradise,
Adam sat before the gates and wept,
and, beating his hands upon his face, he cried out:
"I am fallen; O merciful Lord, have mercy on me."**

**When he was driven out by the angel
who closed the door of the heavenly garden,
groaning, Adam cried aloud and said:
"I am fallen; O merciful Lord, have mercy on me."**

**O Paradise, share in the sorrow of your fallen master,
and, with your whispering leaves pray, to the Creator
that He may not keep your gates closed forever.
I am fallen; O merciful Lord, have mercy on me.**

**O blessed Paradise, perfect and all-holy,
planted for Adam and shut because of Eve
pray to God for the fallen.
I am fallen; O merciful Lord, have mercy on me.**

From Matins, Sunday of Forgiveness

The Tree of Life

The Cross is the universal mark of the Christian faith; it identifies houses of worship and adorns the persons of prelate and peasant alike. In the traditional Churches of East and West it is both a symbol and a conveyer of blessing. From ancient times Christians have traced it upon their bodies as a prayer and a mark of reverence – and as a powerful invocation of divine protection in times of peril. All Christians embrace it as a sign of the salvation wrought in Christ Jesus.

In the Byzantine tradition the Cross is also a singular object of devotion. It is kissed by the faithful at the end of Divine Liturgy and upon entering and leaving church. It is carried in procession in times of need or danger or at the beginning of some important work, such as the foundation of a church. It boasts three feasts in the Church's liturgical calendar when it is exposed for the solemn veneration of the faithful. One of these occurs at the very heart of Lent.

Having been enshrined on the Holy Table of the Altar since before Vespers of the previous evening, the Cross is carried in procession to the middle of the church at the end of Matins on the Third Sunday of Lent. It is placed on the tetrapod, and both clergy and faithful approach to venerate it in solemn fashion. It remains there for the veneration of the faithful until the end of the final Service of the following Friday, when it is returned to the Altar.

In the Gospel of that Sunday's Divine Liturgy (Mk. 8:34 – 9:1), Jesus tells us point blank what being His disciple means: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Those who first heard these words could have had no misconception

about what they meant. Crucifixion was a common form of execution; most people would have seen slaves and criminals of low estate carrying their crosses on their way to a gruesome death. They would know precisely to what end carrying the cross must lead. Even today it remains a hard saying for many.

Yet, for us, the Cross is a symbol of salvation, blessing, victory, and joy. We hail it during the Services of the Third Sunday of Lent and the days following as the new Tree of Life, the Gate of Paradise, the protection of mankind, the invincible weapon of faith; it is brilliant, life-giving, splendid with beauty; through it our tears are dried up, the power of death is abolished,

and we are raised up to heaven. Nor is this exuberance confined to its particular feasts; it is always described in the texts as *the Precious and life-giving Cross*, and at Resurrection Matins on every Sunday of the year we sing: **Behold, through the Cross joy has come**

**Reaching the midpoint
of this Fast of forty days,
with eager hearts
let us hasten with Christ
to the divine Passion;
that, crucified with Him,
we may share in His Resurrection.**

From Matins,
Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

to the world.

We do not see the Cross in isolation. We contemplate it always with a view toward its ultimate effect. Through His suffering and death upon it, Christ brought us to salvation. We always see the Cross in the light of the Resurrection; it is no longer an instrument of pain and death, but, rather, the source of new life. It is, indeed, for us the cause of rejoicing, and we embrace it with love.

This, of course, does not negate the reality of human pain. The call to carry the Cross is still a hard saying. Sorrow and suffering in many and varied forms remain very much a part of our life in this vale of tears, and it is difficult to find



Workmen apply soffiting and facia to the nearly completed exterior of the Chapel of the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering.

much joy in them. Yet, if we would be true followers of Christ, we must face them confidently, knowing they have already been overcome in the sufferings of Christ and that beyond them lies the Resurrection. In Christ our sufferings are transformed and transcended. Uniting them to the Cross of Jesus, we share in His saving Passion, and likewise in His life-giving Resurrection.

Our new church, here at Jacob's Falls, will feature a striking image of our union with the sufferings of Christ. Overlain with pure beaten silver and standing ten feet above its three-tiered platform, **The Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering** will be enshrined in a meditation chapel of the same name. Draped upon the Cross are to be three silver crowns of thorns, symbolizing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, of His blessed mother as she stood beneath the Cross, and

of all the faithful who unite their suffering with His. A woodworker and a silversmith have been working on the Cross since autumn, and they expect to have it ready for erection in its chapel by mid-summer.

Already this summer, even before its construction was complete, several people have sensed the little chapel as a place of healing. One visiting priest noted: "Yes, here they will come, burdened with their sorrows and their suffering. They will pray; they will lay them at the foot of the Cross; they will leave them here; and they will be healed."

God grant us always to glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!



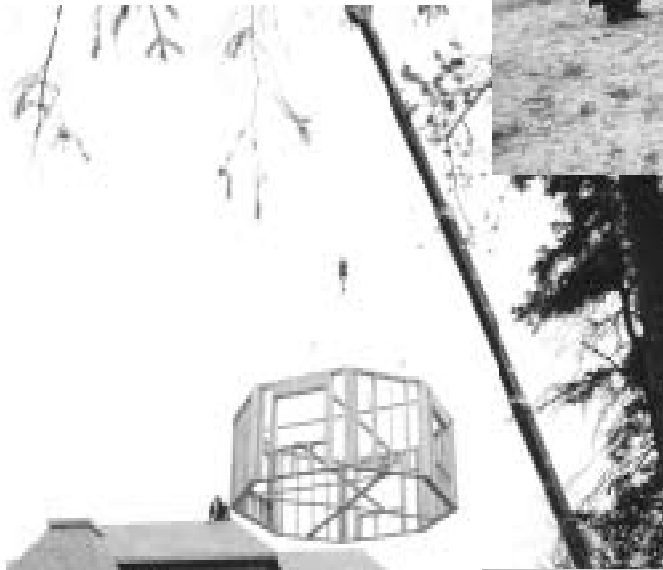
Artists Martin Herrera and Patricia Pawlicki examine the layout of silver plating for the Holy Cross of Sorrow and Suffering.

The Work Moves Forward

The Newly framed Tower Octagon in the Jampot parking lot, awaiting transportation to the building site.



The Crane raises the octagon toward its destination.



On scaffolding raised under the octagon, workers frame the tower vaulting.



Looking East, into the Tower.



Workmen finish drywall at the West windows of the church.



The South windows and Tower of the church.



Octagon ceiling awaits final installation of the dome before completion.



Looking East, towards the future Sanctuary of the church.



Nearly completed building awaits springtime erection of dome and bell tower.

Seasons Continue out of Joint ¹¹

were secure enough for interior mechanical,

The exceptionally wet weather that had marked the final weeks of the **Jampot** season continued throughout October and into November; there were a few snowfalls, and an ice storm or two enticed us away from our production work to see its spectacular handiwork. The precipitation, at length, played itself out, and we had many crisp, clear days with only moderately cold temperatures. Christmas and New Year's Day passed, and we were still without significant snow.



The delay in the change of seasons we had experienced for more than a year seemed to be continuing; we were grateful. The autumn rain had slowed work on the new building in a number of ways and had taken its toll on the exposed areas of the existing structure. The colder, drier weather, however, despite occasional snow flurries, proved a good working environment, and the construction made excellent progress. By Theophany, when major snow finally did arrive, the new spaces

electrical, and drywall work to proceed.

Then winter set down heavy upon us. Temperatures for most of January and February hovered around zero, and there was an abundance of snow. For much of the time, the Lake was frozen as far we could see. March brought warmer days and some melting. It proved a false spring; at the end of the month we were again hit with a heavy snow fall - and two more weeks of cold weather.



Now, on the verge of Holy Week, it has begun to warm again, and, for the first time in two months, we have open water off our shore. We look forward to the thaw, the blossoms, and the greening - and to the return of so many good friends to the **Jampot**. We look forward to seeing you there. Until then, you may wish to avail yourself of the items listed on the following pages.

Journey's End

Our long Lenten pilgrimage nears its end. We reach the raising of Lazarus and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We enter into the spiritual intensity of Holy Week. Soon, after reliving Jesus' final hours and watching at His tomb, we will enter the light-filled chapel to the glorious chant: **Christ is risen from the dead, trampling Death by death and, to those in the grave, bestowing life!**

Outside, spring is only just begun. Our late snow still lies heavily all around. But the days are longer now, and the sun higher; water drips off the roofs and runs in the ditches beside the road; the creeks swell. The land begins to emerge from beneath its blanket of cold, and we look forward to the renewal of life that comes with winter's end. Blossoms are still weeks away, and leaves more than a month off, but the promise of new growth gladdens the heart.

This will be our last Holy Week and Pascha in our little chapel. By summer's end our new church will be ready for use, and the old school

house that served as the center of our life and worship these past twenty years will be converted to other uses. There is always a certain melancholy in parting with the old, but the promise of the new brings surpassing joy.

Each day the work moves closer to fulfillment - window and door trim is nearly complete, tile setting has begun, and library shelving is being installed - and life here takes on a certain edge of anticipation. It will be a hectic summer; moving into the new spaces and altering the old will coincide with our busiest months at the **Jampot**. We trust the Lord will provide the necessary energy and endurance as He has provided so much else.

He has blessed us, especially, with friends. The present work would not be possible without the prayers, patronage, and generosity of so many good people these past twenty years. We hold them all in our hearts as we again enter upon this most holy season. May our merciful and loving Lord Jesus grant them all peace and joy and fill them with the light of His Resurrection.

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