



# The Protecting Veil

2011-12, Issue 1

September 2011

## Happy New Year!

Beloved of the Lord,

September 1st marks the start of another year in the Church's Calendar, and we are encouraged to let that calendar govern our lives as Orthodox Christians. There are many calendars in our lives, all of which strive to have us fashion our lives according to their ebb and flow.

There's the School calendar, which certainly regulates the lives of students and their parents. Due dates and assemblies, reporting periods and examinations—all of these structure our lives if we're still in school, or have children (and grandchildren) in school.

Then there's the work calendar—the schedule we have to follow if we're employed, especially if we work shifts.

The civil calendar tells us when our society marks occasions and events—telling us when to celebrate and when to be more reflective (although there is less and less of the latter these days).

Sports teams have calendars, and they certainly tell athletes (and their families) where to be and when!

None of these calendars—ways of marking time—are bad. They all help us to be aware of what's happening in our lives. And that's good. The real question is this: Which of these calendars

rules—that is, which is most important for us, for the shaping and governing of our lives?

The Church Calendar does one thing none of the others do. In addition to letting us know days and times, celebrations and times for reflection, the Church's Calendar brings us life, because it is designed to lead us deeper and deeper into the mystery of union with Christ.

This year I encourage you to allow the Church's calendar to be first in your lives—to let your lives be shaped by the feasts and fasts of the Church, to the glory of God.

*Fr. Raphael*

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## Did you know...?

- Last month, on the 10th of August, Nancy and Nick Bidoluk celebrated their 64th Wedding Anniversary! God grant them many years!
- September 19th is the 7th Anniversary of the first Orthodox Service in Fort Saskatchewan—A Service of Typica, served in River-view Funeral Home—our first Service as an Orthodox Community.

## Pokrov Orthodox Christian Books and Icons Is Now Open

Our Parish Bookstore is now officially open. It's full name is "Pokrov Orthodox Christian Books and Icons". "Pokrov" is the Slavonic word for Protection, and so it's a fitting name for those who find refuge under the protecting veil of the Holy Theotokos.

The bookstore is still low on supplies. We are looking for bookstore benefactors who

are able to donate generously in order to build up our stock. At present we do not have enough stock to be able to advertise to the wider Orthodox community and parishes in the area.

It is planned that we will stock books and icons—that's in our name! But also jewelry, cards, and items for the home prayer corner. If you know of someone who

can be approached as a benefactor, please let it be known to Fr. Raphael or a member of the Parish Executive (contact information is on the last page).



## September Feasts—NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS—8th

The Holy Virgin Mary was born of aged parents, Joachim and Anna. Her father was of the lineage of David, and her mother of the lineage of Aaron. Thus, she was of royal birth by her father, and of priestly birth by her mother. In this, she foreshadowed Him Who would be born of her as King and High Priest. Her parents were quite old and had no children. Because of this they were ashamed before men and humble before God. In their humility they prayed to God with tears, to bring them joy in their old age by giving them a child, as He had once given joy to

the aged Abraham and his wife Sarah by giving them Isaac. The Almighty and All-seeing God rewarded them with a joy that surpassed all their expectations and all their most beautiful dreams. For He gave them not just a daughter, but the Mother of God. He illumined them not only with temporal joy, but with eternal joy as well. God gave them just one daughter, and she would later give them just one grandson-but what a daughter and what a Grandson! Mary, Full of grace, Blessed among women, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Altar of the Living God, the Table of the

Heavenly Bread, the Ark of God's Holiness, the Tree of the Sweetest Fruit, the Glory of the race of man, the Praise of womanhood, the Fount of virginity and purity-this was the daughter given by God to Joachim and Anna. She was born in Nazareth, and at the age of three, was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. In her young womanhood she returned again to Nazareth, and shortly thereafter heard the Annunciation of the Holy Archangel Gabriel concerning the birth of the Son of God, the Savior of the world, from her most-pure virgin body



## Weekday Services at Holy Protection

Now that our Community has a more permanent home, weekday services are not only possible, they are almost unavoidable.

One of the primary purposes of the Church is to intercede for the salvation of souls—both those who already belong to the Church and those who do not yet belong. This is one of the things that we do in all of our Services—we intercede for ourselves and for others. Another purpose is the teaching role of the Church, which is met primarily in our Services, which proclaim the Doctrine of the Faith, expressed in the variable hymns, canons and readings used.

OUR "REGULAR" WEEKDAY SCHEDULE (TUESDAYS THROUGH FRIDAYS IS:

7:30 am—Orthros + 8:30 am—1st & 3rd Hours + 12 pm—6th Hour + 4 pm—9th Hour

Vespers: Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm and Paraklesis: Friday evenings at 6:30 pm

Weeks in which there is a Feast will vary. Please see the Calendar or Website for variances

Few of us can participate in Daily Services, but by pausing and making the sign of the Cross at the time when Services are being offered, we receive the blessings of being there!

## Ask Abouna

One of the roles a monthly newsletter serves is to teach the Faith and to answer questions. Our regular Newsletters will feature a Question and Answer column called "Ask Abouna"

Answers for your questions can be requested by noting your question on one of the

blue index cards near the offering basket and placing it in the Offering basket.

No question is off-limits and no question is either too simple nor too complicated to ask—and most of the time the question we don't ask is one many

other people are also refraining from asking!

So, ask away! You don't have to sign your question and no one will get "in trouble" for asking one! Abouna is waiting to answer your questions, hopefully with grace and maybe even a little humour!



## Fall 2011 Study Series—Exploring Prayer: The Jesus Prayer

Beginning Wednesday, September 21st, and running for 5 weeks, Holy Protection will be offering a course on “The Jesus Prayer”

The Jesus Prayer is the quintessential Orthodox prayer of the heart, a prayer which draws us deeper into the mystery of God’s love and mercy. The seven words “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” when offered to our Lord and Master has the effect, in Frederica Mathewes-Green’s words, “of tuning the heart to God”

much as an orchestra is “tuned” to the same key so that all that is played is in harmony. In much the same way, the committed praying of this simple prayer helps our whole lives be consistent and in harmony.

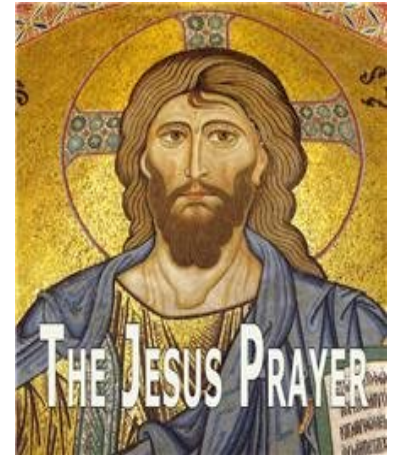


Each evening will begin with Daily Vespers at 6:30 pm,

with the class following from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

There is a \$30 registration fee which covers the book “The Jesus Prayer” by Mathewes-Green, the cost of printed resources which will be handed out during the course and, of course, a prayer rope.

The Study Series is open to anyone who has an interest in prayer, and is NOT restricted to Orthodox Christians. All are welcome to come and participate.



## September Feasts—THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS—15th

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ is celebrated on Wednesday, September 15th. The Day is kept as a Fast day.

Two events in connection with the Honourable Cross of Christ are commemorated on this day: First, the finding of the Honourable Cross on Golgotha and second, the return of the Honourable Cross from Persia to Jerusalem.

Visiting the Holy Land, the holy Empress Helena decided to find the Honourable Cross of Christ. An old Jewish man named Judah was the only one who knew where the Cross was located, and, constrained by the empress, he revealed that the Cross was buried under the temple of Venus that Emperor Hadrian had built on Golgotha. The empress ordered that this idolatrous temple be razed and, having

dug deep below it, found three crosses.

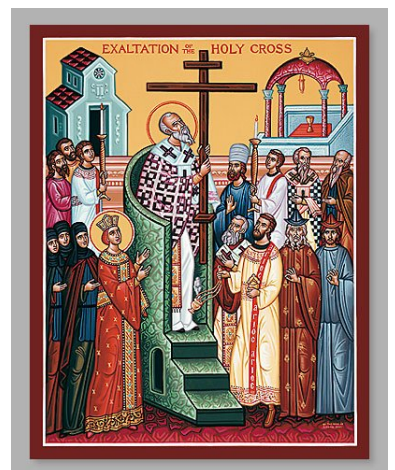
While the empress pondered on how to recognize which of these was the Cross of Christ, a funeral procession passed by. Patriarch Macarius told them to place the crosses, one by one, on the dead man. When they placed the first and second cross on the dead man, the dead man lay unchanged. When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ. They then placed the Cross on a sick woman, and she became well. The patriarch elevated the Cross for all the people to see, and the people sang with tears: “Lord, have mercy!” Empress Helena had a silver case made and set the Honourable Cross in it.

Later, the Persian Emperor Chozroes conquered Jerusa-

lem, enslaved many people, and took the Lord’s Cross to Persia. The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years. In the year 628 the Greek Emperor Heraclius defeated Chozroes and, with much ceremony, returned the Cross to Jerusalem.

As he entered the city Emperor Heraclius carried the Cross on his back, but suddenly was unable to take another step. Patriarch Zacharias saw an angel preventing the emperor from bearing the Cross on the same path that the Lord had walked barefoot and humiliated. The patriarch communicated this vision to the emperor. The emperor removed his raiment and, in ragged attire and barefoot, took up the Cross, carried it to Golgotha, and placed it in the Church of the Resurrection, to the joy and consolation of the whole Christian world.

When they placed the third cross on him, the dead man came back to life. By this they knew that this was the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ.



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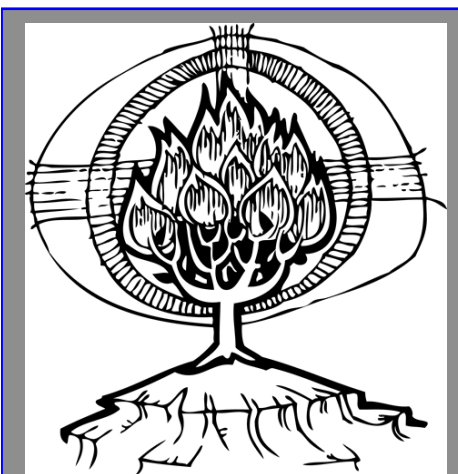
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The “Unburnt Bush” which was revealed on Mount Sinai to Moses is an image which prefigured—that is pointed forward to—the Most Holy Theotokos. Just as the Bush burned with fire and yet was not consumed, so too did the Mother of God contain the fire of Divinity and yet was not consumed. Thus, the Unburnt Bush is one of the symbols we can use to represent our heavenly Patron, under whose protecting veil we find refuge.

This image has been prepared for embroidery on jackets, vests and sweat-shirts and is available at HOME TEAM ADVANTAGE downtown on 103 Street

## Reflection by St. Theophan on Wednesday's Epistle Reading from II Cor. 3:4-11

How many mercies the Lord revealed to Jerusalem, (that is to the Jews). And, in the end, he was still forced to say, Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. It is well-known to all what the consequences of this were: the Jews to this day are homeless.

Does not a similar thing occur with the soul? The Lord cares for it and gives it understanding in every way; an obedient soul walks the path indicated, but a disobedient soul remains in opposition to God's calling. But the Lord does not abandon even this soul, and uses every means to bring it to reason. If stubbornness increases, God's influence increases. But there is measure to everything. A soul becomes hardened, and the Lord, seeing that already there is nothing more that can be done with this soul, leaves it in the hands of its own fall, and it perishes, like pharaoh.

Let anyone who is beset by passions learn the lesson from this that is he cannot continue indulging himself indefinitely without punishment. Is it not time to abandon those passions—not just to deny oneself occasionally, but to decisively turn away? Indeed, nobody can say when he will overstep the limit. Perhaps the end to God's longsuffering is just around the corner.

## Parish Executive Committee

Since we moved into our new premises, the Officers of our Community (listed with contact information on the upper left of this page) have begun to meet regularly in order to ensure that we operate properly and effectively.

The Executive consists of the President and Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Parish Priest. Since the resignation of our President in June, the Executive agreed to continue with one less member until the new year when our Annual General Meeting will be held.

One of the things the members of the Executive agreed upon was the importance of ongoing and effective communication. To this end we will be

publishing monthly newsletters (including the column “Ask Abouna”).

As well, minutes from Executive meetings will be posted on the rear bulletin board (near the coat room and wash-room) as will our quarterly financial reports. Please take the time to check the bulletin board and keep up to date on the work the members of the Executive are offering in behalf of all the members of our Community.

On the rear bulletin board you will also find the “check-list” for the ongoing work which needs to be finished from our move into the Mall, as well as the monthly checklist for the proper care and maintenance of our fire prevention equipment.

Our Website is being updated and will soon be relaunched. Until that happens, our calendar of Services, activities and events is still available at FortSaskOrthodox.org.

Parishioners are welcome—indeed urged—to being any concerns they may have to any of the Executive members.

Our outreach will include timely articles in our local newspapers, as well as regularly scheduled Study Sessions which are open to the wider community. The Study Series on the Jesus Prayer (see page 3) is an example of these.

The members of the Executive are committed to this Parish Family, and to offering themselves as leaders—leaders following in the steps of the Master.