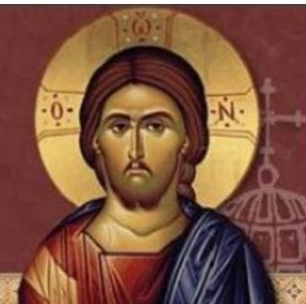


THE SPIRIT

LENT EDITION

MARCH 2013



UPCOMING EVENTS

Youth Night

Every Thursday 7pm

Micha | 0403 277 488

Feed the Homeless

Every Monday 7:15pm

Isabel | 0414 959 129

LENT SERVICE

Monday, Tuesday &
Thursday
Great Compline: 7pm

Wednesday
Pre-Sanctified Liturgy:
7pm

Friday
Akathist: 7pm

Saturday
Vespers: 6pm

**Do you know someone who
can sponsor a communal
bus for St Nicholas?**

If so, please contact:

**Abouna John
0416 088 588**

MEASURING GOODNESS: 101

The movie *Chocolat* is an ultimate favourite of mine. Not only because it has Johnny Depp, chocolate and French people, but because of its enriching message. The movie centres on a single mother who, during Lent, opens a chocolate shop in a small Christian village in France. She is judged, scrutinised and cast out by the Christians for being an unmarried mother and opening a chocolaterie during the fasting period. Her kind nature, however, wins over many of the townspeople and she shows them what it truly means to fast. She teaches them to be accepting, kind and good hearted.

After all, to quote the film, "Goodness isn't measured by what we deny ourselves, what we resist or who we exclude. Rather it's about what we create, who we embrace and who we include."

I guess this movie reminds me of how we tend to act during Lent. We're too busy focusing on what we should and shouldn't eat, we let our behaviour run astray and we lose sight of what it truly means to fast.

Abouna John says Lent is about creating a new spiritual heart. It's about being a good, loving and merciful person. That's where the true fast resides.

"The food doesn't save us, doesn't sanctify us. It goes into the stomach and goes out. What will sanctify us is the spiritual fasting, the fasting to love our brother." said Abouna John.

Fasting off meat and dairy is only a small part of Lent. Centring our attention on Jesus Christ and His teachings is the ultimate way to fast. And what better way to express our love for Him and embrace His teachings than to foster them into action. Engross yourself in prayer, be kind, accepting, forgiving and love one another. Your goodness, after all, is measured by how you act, not what you eat.

Ruperta Daher



THE SUNDAYS OF LENT

Each Sunday during Great Lent has its own spiritual theme.

The first Sunday is called the **Feast of the Triumph**. It commemorates the return of the icons to the orthodox church in the year 843.

The second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of **St Gregory Palamas**, who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit

The third Sunday is the **Veneration of the Cross**.

The fourth Sunday is dedicated to **St John of the Ladder**.

The fifth Sunday is dedicated to **Saint Mary of Egypt**, who tells us that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents.

A PRAYER FOR LENT

“O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant.

Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sin and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed from all ages to all ages. Amen.”

Saint Ephraim

A TALE OF TWO EASTERS

Being of Orthodox faith, I’m sure many of us have encountered friends’ questions and queries on why our Lenten and Pascha celebrations fall on different dates. And no, it’s not about getting our chocolate Easter eggs at half price! This question holds a deeper and more theological explanation.

First and foremost, both denominations believe in celebrating Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon and after the Spring Equinox. However, while the Western Catholics follow the Gregorian calendar established by Pope Gregory, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox follow the ancient Julian calendar initiated under the Roman Emperor Julian. Divergent dates are thus encountered.

But wait, there’s more! As many may know, if it had not been for St. Paul’s evangelised encounter of Christ on the road to Damascus, Christianity may have remained a sect of Judaism rather than the dynamic living tradition of 2.1 billion adherents today. Despite this schism, many aspects of Judaism continue to underpin Christian traditions. The role of the Jewish liturgical year, for example, provides the basis for the Christian movable feasts, including that of Pascha.

Thus, for Orthodox Christians, whether they be Antiochian, Greek, Russian etc, Easter always falls “after

“We seek and we pray for our return to that time when, being united, we spoke the same things and there was no schism between us.”

Saint Mark of Ephesus



Passover” (*Zonaras proviso*) since the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ took place after He entered Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. In this way, the Jewish Passover and the Orthodox Pascha go hand in hand, just like Easter chocolate and...more chocolate!

But it is nevertheless important to remember that despite varying Easter dates across the Christian tradition, Pascha is regarded the most religious Christian observance, where we come together as a Church body in commemoration of our Saviour’s sacrifice, so that we sinners may be forgiven.

So, next time a friend asks, “But, like, why are you guys so delayed?” remember the ‘3 to E...aster’; Spring full moon, Julian calendar and the Jewish Passover. For now, here’s to awaiting those half price Easter eggs, the vicious and competitive egg cracking competitions and that amazing Easter feast. But most importantly, the Passion of our Christ.

‘...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.’ (Romans 12:5)

Samantha Antoun

SAINT SERGIUS AND BACCHUS

Saints Sergius and Bacchus were high ranked soldiers in the Roman army, under the ruling of Emperor Maximian. Jealous of their high rank, people told the Emperor how they didn't worship and offer sacrifices to idols. The Emperor refused to believe it at first, as they were his trusted friends. Yet, to see if this was true, the Emperor asked Sergius and Bacchus to go and worship and sacrifice in the temple of Zeus. The Emperor went before them to the temple and began to pray and offer sacrifice. He looked around and found Sergius and Bacchus praying outside.

Emperor Maximian sent one of his guards to bring them in and he said to them, "It appears that, counting on my great friendship and kindness for which the gods have been your defenders and advocates, you have seen fit to disdain imperial law and to become deserters and enemies of the gods. But I will not spare you if indeed those things spoken of you prove to be true. Go, then, to the altar of mighty Zeus, make sacrifice and consume, like everyone else, the mystical offerings."

The noble martyrs replied, "We, O Emperor, are obliged to render to you earthly service of this corporal body; but we have a true and eternal king in heaven, Jesus the Son of God, who is the commander of our souls, our hope and our refuge of salvation. To him every day we offer a holy, living sacrifice, our thoughtful worship. We do not sacrifice to stones or wood, nor do we bow to them. Your gods have ears, but they do not hear the prayers of humans; just as they have noses but do not smell the sacrifice

Kontakion in the Third Tone

As we gather, let us crown with sacred hymns of laudation those two brethren in the Faith, the great and valorous martyrs: Sergius was the Triune Godhead's most steadfast warrior; and with him, wise Bacchus manfully suffered torments; and they both confessed Christ Saviour as God, the Maker and sacred Trainer of all.



brought them, have mouths but do not speak, hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk. 'They that make them,' as the Scripture says, 'are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them because Thou are with us.'"

The Emperor was outraged and subjected them to humiliation. He had them parade in women's clothing in the streets and had them tortured and scourged, from which Saint Bacchus died. Saint Sergius was then taken to Resapha in Syria, where he was tortured and beheaded. His tomb in Resapha became a very famous shrine, to which pilgrims came from as far as Western Europe. Resapha was later renamed Sergiopolis in his honour. Many miracles and cures have occurred where his Holy Relics were. It's said that even the animals come and observe on the day of his death.

Through the intercession of Saints Sergius and Bacchus and all the Saints, O Lord have Mercy on us and Save us. Amen.

Micha Chalhoub

YOUTH NIGHT

What are your plans for Thursday night? Come and join us at the church house every Thursday at 7:00 PM for a night filled with fun, prayer and reflection.

Since its birth, St Nicholas has focused on uniting its youth, aiming to bring them closer to God and His word, so they may shine like His son and bring Him glory. Character building, spiritual growth and participating in fellowship with others who share the same Christian values and beliefs are vital for youth prosperity.

The 'Youth Night' starts off with fun games, followed by open religious discussions on a given topic. The night ends with an uplifting Compline service; the final church service of the day in the daily liturgical cycle prior to going to sleep.

We would love to see you all there, so please consider yourself at home and part of our wonderful St Nicholas family and come along this Thursday!

Sayde Daoud

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly, the angel who guards you will honor your patience. "

St. John of the Ladder

THE BIG KICK OFF

Saint Nicholas kicked off February with a FIFA competition! The call was made and people of all ages were quick to respond. These passionate participants flocked in numbers to be a part of this enjoyable 'world game.' About forty people entered the competition, and it was superb to see what they all had to offer!



The competition was very intense and less than 20 players made it to the second round. After a roller coaster second round, the final four competitors were Jordan Farah, David Seeman, Youssef Attallah and Tony Beylouni. The final round was filled with amazing game play, passion and skill.

However, like every knockout competition, there can only be one winner, and that was Jordan Farah! Jordan was fantastic throughout the competition! His skills were top notch and his kind Christian nature really complimented his hard effort over the few weeks. A very well deserved win Jordan; congratulations brother! Thank you to all the participants, spectators and helpers during the competition.

Michel Nahas

GETTING TO KNOW YOU-TH



Name: Norm Elias

Favourite Colour: Blue

Favourite Food: Okra

Favourite Quote:

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even

touched, they must be felt within the heart."

Involvement in the church:

I volunteer in the youth committee, helping the priest prepare for service and train those who want to be part of the service, e.g. the altar boys.

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go?

I would travel to Europe!

If you had the power to change the world, what would you do?

I would make it a better place to live in by providing equity to all!

What is your lifelong dream?

To experience and travel around the world!