
PARISH LIFE: VISIT OF THE KURSK-ROOT ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD



On **Friday 6 March** at **7.00pm** the wonderworking Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God will visit our parish. This icon is one of the most revered images of the Mother of God in the Russian Orthodox Church, and also one of the most ancient, dating back to at least 1259 AD. The icon is particularly important to our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, having been in the custody of our Church since the 1920s. The icon was last in our parish in November 2011. All are encouraged to be in church to greet the icon when it arrives and to offer prayers before this precious icon of the Mother of God. A moleben and an akathist will be served before it. It will be in Wallsend the following morning at 10.00am, and on the afternoon of Saturday 7 March, God willing, it will visit the Saint Seraphim Community Russian School in Hornsby.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: PARKING AT 7 COMSERV CLOSE

It is important to remember that the area outside our church at West Gosford is shared space and that the occupants of the other units require access to their premises at all times. Some tensions have arisen recently when access to the other units has been made difficult on Sunday mornings because our parishioners and friends have parked inappropriately. We ask that everyone take care when parking and that attention be given to the signs outside each unit, particularly those that say **"NO PARKING ANYTIME"**. There should be no parking in front of any roller doors. With the increased number of people in church over the past few months, parking on Comserv Close itself is generally best.

PARISH LIFE: DECEMBER 2014 – MARCH 2015

Our last newsletter, the December 2014 edition, was published the weekend of Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 December. More people than usual were present for the service that evening, and on Sunday morning our small church was full to overflowing with our regular parishioners and visitors from Sydney. Many people received Holy Communion. Following the dismissal a memorial litia was served for Sophia Kfoury, the fortieth day of whose repose it was on Saturday 20 December. Nina Golovin and the Kfoury family had prepared a meal in Sophia's memory, and many stayed to share in it and to enjoy one another's company. Despite the sadness this was a wonderful day in the life of our parish.

On Wednesday 24 December we had the first English-language moleben and akathist to the heavenly protector of our parish, the Great-Martyr Panteleimon. More information about our regular akathists is available elsewhere in this edition.

On Saturday 3 January our parish had its customary clean-up in preparation for Christmas. Over 20 parishioners gathered to assist with this work. All the furniture was removed from the church to be washed and polished, the oil lamps were cleaned and refilled, the icons were wiped and dusted, and everything in church was made to shine. The green Christmas vestments were ironed in readiness for the festive services. Afterwards, all shared a Lenten meal before returning home. May the Lord bless all those who helped!

On Saturday 3 January and Sunday 4 January we had services for the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ. Our small church was again full on Sunday, with many people receiving Holy Communion. At the Prayer before the Amvon Father James blessed eight beautiful new green vestments for the parish altar-servers, the work of the Convent of Saint Elisabeth in Minsk, Belarus. The purchase of these vestments was made possible by the hard work of our Ladies' Auxiliary. A further eight vestments arrived on the following day and were blessed separately in preparation for the Christmas services.

On Tuesday 6 January and Wednesday 7 January we had services for the Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ. Prior to the services our small church had been beautifully decorated by Katia Waters and Wassim Ayoub. On Tuesday evening All-night Vigil (Great Compline and Matins) with the blessing of five loaves, wheat, wine and oil was served with a great many people in attendance. At Matins our parishioner Alexander Momot, a Russian Orthodox man born in Harbin and blind from his birth, read the Six Psalms, having committed them to memory in his childhood. On the following day our church was again full – visitors from Newcastle and Sydney joining us for the feast – and many of the faithful received Holy Communion. Following the Prayer before the Amvon we had a brief Moleben of Thanksgiving to mark the anniversary of the deliverance in 1812 of the Russian Church and Empire from the invasion of the French and twelve other nations. Father James then read aloud Metropolitan Hilarion's 2015 Nativity Epistle. After the service many remained behind to share in a festive meal in church hall.

On Saturday 10 January Father James baptised six year-old Andrew Aristarchov, the son of Dmitry and Irina Aristarchov. Andrew, who was baptised in honour of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called, had as his sponsors at Holy Baptism Konstantin Ouskov and Ekaterina Lysenko. We offer warm congratulations to Dmitry, Irina, Konstantin and Ekaterina, and wish the newly-baptised Andrew many years!

Later that day many of our parishioners and friends participated in a Christmas party organised by the Saint Seraphim Community Russian School in Hornsby. The party took place on the grounds of Mount Colah Public School. Approximately 85 children were present, together with their families, to participate in games and receive a gift from Father Christmas. Adding to the festive atmosphere was a community market, with our parish bookstore operating a stall. Congratulations to the school Principal, Paul Douriaguine, and to all who worked to make the day such a success.

On Thursday 15 January Father James served the funeral of Nadejda Feldman in the chapel at Palmdale Lawn Cemetery and Memorial Park. Nadejda reposed aged 78 on Thursday 8 January, the second day of the Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ. She is survived by her husband Victor, their children Vera, Liubov and Alexandre, and their grandchildren, to whom we offer condolences. May God grant her rest!

On Thursday 15 January we learned with sadness of the repose that morning of our parishioner, Michael Grigorieff. Born in Shanghai on 29 December 1933, Michael came to Australia with his family in the mid-1930s, serving in the Australian Army during the 1950s. Michael had a long association with the Central Coast and was a member of our parish from

2006. His funeral was served in our church on Thursday 22 January, after which he was laid to rest at the Noraville Cemetery. Michael is survived by two sons, Adrian and John, to whom we offer sincere condolences. May God grant rest to His departed servant!

On Saturday 17 January and Sunday 18 January we had services for the Eve of the Great Feast of Theophany. On Saturday evening Matins was served and on Sunday morning, Divine Liturgy followed by Vespers and the Great Blessing of Water. Despite the heat and the great length of the service, many people gathered in church and remained to the end to partake of the Holy Water. That afternoon Father James visited a number of parish homes for the customary Theophany blessing. On the following day a number of our parishioners travelled to the parish of Saint Nicholas, Wallsend, to participate in the festive services there.

The custom of Father James visiting parish homes during the festive days following the Great Feast of Theophany to bless them with the Holy Water was established back in January 2002. The troparion and kontakion of the feast are sung as the Holy Water is sprinkled throughout the home, and afterwards prayers are offered before the family icons for the health and salvation of those dwelling there. This year, the blessing of homes began on the afternoon of the Eve of Theophany, continuing on the day of the feast and the days that followed. This year, nearly 40 homes on the Central Coast and in Hornsby and Sydney's north were blessed during the week that followed the feast.

During the week after Theophany we learned with joy of the birth, on 21 January 2015, of a baby boy, Thomas, to Nadine Lucas (nee Kobeleff) and her husband Alex. Thomas is Alex's and Nadine's first child. We warmly congratulate them, and wish God's continued blessing on their married life.

On Saturday 31 January and Sunday 1 February we had services for the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the first Sunday of preparation for Great Lent. Once again, a greater than usual number of people gathered on both Saturday night and Sunday morning. Although our parish deacon Father Martin Naef was absent, travelling abroad for work, we were joined for Divine Liturgy by a dear friend of the parish, Protodeacon German Polorotov, now assigned to the Gold Coast-Tweed Heads parish of our Diocese. Many stayed afterwards for a cup of tea and company.

On Saturday 14 February and Sunday 15 February we had services for the Great feast of the Meeting of the Lord and for the Sunday of the Last Judgement. All-night vigil was served on Saturday evening with our full choir singing under the direction of Olga Ivanovna Itsikson. At the end of Divine Liturgy on Sunday there was a blessing of candles and - in accordance with the practice of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia - baskets of seasonal fruit. The candles, a gift to our parish, were distributed to the faithful for use at home. As it was twenty years to the day since the repose of the ever-memorable Archbishop Paul (Pavlov), Ruling Bishop of our Diocese from 1980-1993, a memorial litia was served after the dismissal. Also commemorated was Archpriest Nicholas Grant, a priest of our Diocese from 1975-95, our Diocesan secretary, and a dear friend of Vladyka Paul, it having been the twentieth anniversary of his repose on 14 February 2015. Both were commemorated at the Great Entrance, and prior to the litia Father James spoke about the lives of these two remarkable men and their contribution to the life of the Diocese and, in the case of Vladyka Paul, the wider Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. As the faithful venerated the Cross a collection was taken up to assist the work of Orthodox Action, a charitable organisation operating under the auspices of the Diocese. Afterwards, many stayed to enjoy blini (pancakes) prepared by our hard-working Ladies' Auxiliary.

On the evening of Sunday 22 February, the Sunday of Forgiveness, we had vespers with the rite of asking forgiveness. A good number of our parishioners gathered for this moving service in which, at the mid-point, the Lenten melodies begin and the church vestments are changed to black. Afterwards all asked forgiveness of one another.

On the first four evenings of Great Lent we had the service of Great Compline with the reading of the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete. These solemn services very much set the tone for Great Lent. A small number of people attended, with those present taking it in turns to assist with the reading of the psalms and prayers of Great Compline.

On Saturday 28 February Father James served the funeral of Elena (Lucia) Radu. Lucia reposed aged 67 on Wednesday 25 February. She is survived by her husband Aurel and their daughter Raluka and her husband, to whom we offer condolences. May God grant his newly-departed handmaiden rest!

On the weekend of 28 February and 1 March we had services for the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Reading the Apostol for us on this day was Reader Christopher Dowling, visiting the Central Coast from Canberra. At the end of Divine Liturgy the service of intercession "For the conversion of those in error" was served, it being the custom of the Russian Orthodox Church to do so on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. A collection was then taken up to benefit the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York, the main seminary of our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia.

On the evening of Sunday 1 March vespers with the reading of the First "Passia" (or account of the suffering of Christ) was served. Like Great Compline, this brief service is solemn and very much sets the tone for Great Lent. Our parishioners and friends are encouraged to attend these services and so support their fasting during Great Lent with increased prayer.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Although a meeting was due early in January 2015, the Parish Council decided to take a summer break, meeting for the first time this year on Tuesday 10 February. The usual pastoral, administrative and financial reports were presented. Applications from Con Yakimov, Katerina Rubbo, and Sergey and Irina Shchelokov for renewed parish membership were considered and accepted. Arrangements for the translation of items for our Russian-language website were discussed, and it was agreed that Rick Golovin would represent the parish at Bishop George's induction at Strathfield on 17 April 2015. The Parish Council will next meet on Tuesday 17 March 2015.

DIOCESAN LIFE: THE INDUCTION OF HIS GRACE, BISHOP GEORGE OF CANBERRA

Our parishioners and friends will recall that in October 2014 it became known that Bishop George of Mayfield (USA) had, following his long visit to our Diocese from July-September last year, been appointed by the Synod of Bishops to be the vicar –or assistant – bishop of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese. Although Bishop George has been given the title Bishop of Canberra he will live at the Diocesan Centre in Croydon. Bishop George is due to arrive in Australia on Thursday 16 April 2015, Bright Thursday. On the following day, **Friday 17 April 2015**, Metropolitan Hilarion will preside at Divine Liturgy at Strathfield, formally inducting Bishop George into his new position. All the clergy of the Diocese have been invited to attend, together with their wives and the Warden or another appropriate representative of the parish. In addition to the invited guests, the faithful of the Diocese are welcome to be present for the service. It is expected that representatives of other Orthodox Churches – the Greek, Serbian, Romanian and Antiochian – will be also present.

DIOCESAN LIFE: COLLECTIONS DURING GREAT LENT

In our Diocese two charitable collections are customarily taken up during Great Lent: a collection for the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary (in Jordanville, NY) on the First Sunday, and a collection for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Although we took up the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary collection on Sunday 1 March we will also take contributions on Sunday 15 March from those who missed the first collection. This year we will have services on Palm Sunday and so that collection will be taken up on the appointed day, Sunday 5 April. As there will be no parish "money-box" collection this Great Lent, our parishioners and friends are asked to give generously to these two official collections.

PARISH LIFE: CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION

Great Lent is a time during which more people than usual are preparing for confession in order to receive Holy Communion. Those who wish to confess are asked to make every effort to do so during the evening services, either on the Wednesday evening or the Saturday evening preceding. On Sunday mornings the time within which to hear confessions is very limited, and the hearing of confessions immediately prior to Holy Communion inconveniences everyone.

In the Russian Orthodox Church children begin to confess from the age of seven. Children should be encouraged to think about their confession beforehand, making a list of matters for confession so as not to forget anything. In our parish children under the age of ten need not confess every week, but they should certainly be encouraged to confess during the four main fasting periods. If a number of adults are waiting for confession before Divine Liturgy small children need not confess.

Adults are also encouraged to think carefully through their confession beforehand. As it is the Sacrament of Repentance the focus should be on one's sins, the things for which one needs to repent, rather than all of one's personal difficulties or struggles. If need be, these things can be discussed with the priest at another time. This is particularly important (and helpful to the priest!) at busy times like Great Lent. A list of things to focus on can be as helpful for adults as for children. A simple confession is often the best:



"I have not loved God with all my heart; I have neglected prayer and the services of the church; I have not kept the appointed fasts; I have been untruthful; I have taken what is not mine; I have been unkind and have not shown mercy; I have been lustful and have sinned in thought; I have been ungrateful for what I have and have desired the possessions or circumstances of others. I am sorry for these things and ask for God's forgiveness and His help".

It is generally expected that those preparing to receive Holy Communion will attend the service on the preceding evening. The Prayers of Preparation for Holy Communion should be read early in the morning and – strength and health permitting – a strict fast from food and drink should be kept from midnight before Divine Liturgy. Those with questions about this should speak with Father James.

PARISH LIFE: AUTUMN 2015 SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

As of the beginning of March our Autumn 2015 Schedule of Services has been available at church and online. Covering the months of March, April and May it includes all the services for Great Lent and the entire Paschal season. Significant services include All-night Vigil and

Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday, 4-5 April; Matins with the reading of the Twelve Gospels on Thursday 9 April; Vespers with the bringing out of the Shroud of Christ at 12.00pm on Friday 10 April; an early Paschal service at 7.00pm on the evening of Saturday 11 April; and All-night Vigil and Divine Liturgy for Trinity Sunday (Pentecost) on 30-31 May. **There will be no midnight Paschal service in 2015 as Father James will be serving in Wallsend.**

REMINDER: GENERAL ANOINTING SERVICE

Readers are reminded that we will have the Service of General Anointing (or Соборование) on the evening of **Sunday 29 March 2015** beginning at 6.00pm. All those able to do so are encouraged to confess and receive Holy Communion on the weekend of 28-29 March.

PARISH LIFE: PRE-EASTER CLEAN-UP

On **Friday 3 April 2015** (Western Good Friday) we will have a church clean-up beginning at 8.00am. This will be the major clean-up that we customarily have before Christmas and Pascha each year. All the furnishings will be removed from the church for washing and polishing, all the icons and service items will be cleaned, and the church will be decorated with palms and pussy willows in preparation for Palm Sunday. We will have lunch at around midday. Please join us and help! There is a great deal to be done, and it will be nice to have the church looking bright and clean for Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the Paschal services!

PARISH LIFE: REGULAR MOLEBENS AND AKATHISTS TO ST PANTELEIMON

During December 2014 and January and February 2015 we had five molebens and akathists to the heavenly protector of our parish, the Great-Martyr Panteleimon. As of December 2014, two such services will be scheduled each month. On the second Wednesday of each month the service will be entirely in Church Slavonic, and on the fourth Wednesday of each month the service will be entirely in English. The idea behind this approach is to allow the two separate choirs, Slavonic and English, to grow in familiarity with the service, and also to give everyone an opportunity to pray in their preferred language. Our parishioners and friends are invited to submit names for commemoration at the moleben. **NOTE:** During Great Lent these services will be set aside for the customary Lenten services, but they will resume after Pascha. The next such service will be on Wednesday 22 April, and in English.

REMINDER: 2015 PARISH MEMBERSHIP

With a new year beginning, parish members are now asked to renew their membership, and regular worshippers are invited to consider becoming members. Parish membership is something quite distinct from church attendance, or even participation in the sacramental life of the church. Membership makes it possible for a person to be involved in formal parish decision-making at various levels. A person cannot serve on the Parish Council, for example, without first becoming a parish member.

The rules governing parish membership are set out in the Normal Parish By-Laws or the "Нормальный Приходской Устав" ("the By-Laws") of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR). A person who has reached the age of 18 years may become a member of a ROCOR parish if they are an Orthodox Christian, pay the established membership dues, make their confession and take Holy Communion not less than once a year, and tend to the moral and economic welfare of the parish. **Those unwilling to comply with these requirements should not seek parish membership.**

In our parish, the annual membership fee is \$30.00. Membership is granted for a calendar year; that is, from January to December. New members gain the right to vote only after 6 months of membership. Those new members who transfer membership from another

ROCOR parish may vote immediately. Paragraph 12 of the By-Laws requires any person wishing to become a member of a parish to make a written application to the Parish Council. To make this easier for everyone, our parish has developed an 'Application for Parish Membership' form. Copies of this form can be obtained from the candle-desk in church or on our website on the 'Administration' page.

PARISH LIFE: PROPERTY PURCHASE APPEAL

At our Annual General Meeting in November 2014 the text of an 'Appeal to the faithful of the Australian-New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia' was approved. As all the decisions of the AGM have since been endorsed by Metropolitan Hilarion, action will now be taken to publicise the appeal and take the first steps in the next stage of parish life, a stage that we hope will culminate in the purchase of property and the construction of a permanent church in traditional Russian Orthodox style here in Gosford. The text of the appeal is as follows:

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church was formed by a small group of people living on the NSW Central Coast. The first services were held in November 2000, and by the end of 2003 our community had grown sufficiently to purchase premises in West Gosford for a parish centre. There, as many know, our parish has established a small temporary church and hall and a vibrant parish life that includes a regular pattern of divine services and social activities. A loan of \$125,000 obtained in 2003 to purchase these premises was paid off in full in 2008, some 9 years early, and our parish has since saved a further \$60,000 in its "Future Fund".

During the course of 2014 our parish has celebrated ten years of parish life in West Gosford. Looking back over all that has been achieved since November 2000 and giving thanks to God, we nevertheless continue to plan for the future, hoping in time to construct a permanent church in traditional Russian Orthodox style. The first step towards this is the acquisition of a suitable block of land, something likely to cost around \$400,000. It is with this first step in mind that our parish now turns to the faithful of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia and to all our friends, seeking assistance.

Our Parish Council has resolved to set aside \$40,000 from the "Future Fund" for the purpose of property acquisition, ten per cent of the required amount. Families within the parish have already pledged contributions of \$1000. If 400 families or individuals across the Diocese could be found to contribute such an amount our goal would soon be reached, and the next important step in the life of our parish could be taken.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please give prayerful consideration to our appeal, and help us bring this project to fruition. Any help that you can give, whether great or small, will be most welcome. We assure all those who assist our parish of our prayers for their health and salvation. May the Lord bless you!

When publicising the appeal, the Parish Council will provide details of an account to which donations can be made. Those of our parishioners and friends who would like more information should speak with Father James, Rick Golovin, or another member of the Parish Council.

PARISH LIFE: 2015 CALENDARS

We still have copies available – free of charge to our parishioners and friends! – of our two 2015 calendars. The first is a small magnetic calendar that has our parish contact details and which shows the Saturdays and Sundays on which we expect to have services. The second is a wall calendar in Russian and English that includes festive days and seasons, fasting days and seasons, and Bible readings for each day. A calendar like this is a necessary item in every Orthodox Christian home! Our 2015 wall calendar commemorates Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia from 1936 until his repose in 1965. Both calendars are available at the candle-desk in church. Anyone who is unable to make it to church and who would like one posted to them should contact Father James.

PARISH LIFE: THINGS FOR OUR CHILDREN TO DO DURING CHURCH

It can often be difficult to keep our smaller children contented during our long services. To help with this, Matuhka Marie has prepared a range of colouring-in sheets with spiritual themes. Some illustrate Psalm or other Bible verses ("Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee"), some illustrate petitions from the litanies ("For this city and every city and country") and others illustrate elements of the Divine Liturgy (the Small Entrance, for example). These sheets, together with coloured pencils, are available upon request from Matushka. When colouring-in the children may sit quietly in the hall or, during the evening services, in church. Parents should nevertheless take care to ensure that their children are attentive during the most important parts of each service. Finished work may be displayed in the church hall.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick: Mitred Archpriest Michael (Li), Mitred Archpriest Michael (Klebansky), Mitred Archpriest George (Larin) (from Nyack, NJ), Protodeacon Nicholas (Triantafillidis) (from San Francisco), Nun Euphrosyne (Kobeleff), Leonid (Snopov), Vera (Roudenko); and our parishioners Ludmila, Nestor, Vladimir, Tatiana, and Tatiana.

Families with new babies: Nadine, Alex and baby Thomas.

Prisoners and those in custody: Alexander, Igumen Christopher (Vakhabov)

Newly-departed: Elena Lucia.

Departed: Our former parishioners and benefactors Sophia (Kfoury), Tatiana (Elgin-Borodin), Michael (Grigorieff), Irene (Claydon), Victor (Manjetny), Vladimir (Dmitrieff), George (Fomin), Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan), Elena (Yakupova), Lydia (Ustimko), Nikolai (Pinczuk), Tatiana (Venttsel), and John (Gordeyeff).



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