

St. George Newsletter – October 2009

What should we expect after Holy Communion?

Often, when we read spiritual books, we read about the benefits of Holy Communion. Communion is the true Body and Blood of our Lord, and the most holy substance that we come into contact with – much holier than holy water, relics of saints, holy oil, or wonderworking icons. Sometimes, however, we feel no different after we take Communion. Is this normal?

God created man having two parts: a body and a soul. We all know about taking care of our bodies. Without food and water, we will not survive. If we want to be healthy, we know that we also eat healthy food, sometimes supplementing it with vitamins, and we exercise. Food and exercise are necessary for the soul as well. Our spiritual food, without which our soul cannot survive, is Holy Communion. Our exercises are the rest: prayer, fasting, church services, and almsgiving.

We know that when we take vitamins, we do not immediately feel stronger and healthier. Even after a long time, we do not get a special feeling from vitamins, but we know that they are improving our health. The same is true of Holy Communion. If we commune rarely, we do not usually get a special feeling, just like if we only take vitamins rarely. Even when we commune regularly, our communion with God is constantly, invisibly improving our spiritual condition, and we do not notice how much healthier we have become spiritually. All the same, sometimes it is God's good will to remind us of the benefits that He gives us freely every week, and He blesses us with a feeling of spiritual joy and compunction.

If a person has made the decision to take care of his health, he knows that if he takes a vitamin, but then eats a large, unhealthy meal, and then sits idle, his body will not be able to use the nutrients that the vitamin provides. The same is true of Holy Communion. St. Gregory Palamas, whom we celebrate in the second week of Lent, brought to the forefront of Orthodox thought the distinction between God's essence and energies. God's essence is present in Holy Communion, which we receive freely from Him. We ourselves are responsible for manifesting God's energies in ourselves. This is our spiritual exercise. After Communion, we should struggle to keep first the day holy – avoiding arguments, lies, and so on. After the day of Communion, according to our promise made in confession, we should continue the struggle for holiness, keeping the Church's rules of prayer, fasting, and attending services. In this way, our body receives its necessary spiritual food, and is able to use it in the practice of virtue.

May God grant us all the unending desire to unite with Him in Holy Communion, and the desire to continue our spiritual exercises for the good of our soul.

Our building project

We closed on the purchase of land for our new church on August 27, 2009. Since that time, our brotherhood, led by Gleb Romanovsky, has remodeled the small home on the property to get it back into livable condition. We are now waiting to finish the permit stage, and prepare for construction next Spring.

We are soliciting bids from contractors now for the building. It is likely that with a contractor, the project will cost nearly \$500,000. If we borrow this from the bank, we will need to start also with a \$5,000 appraisal, followed by costly inspections. Also, an outside contractor may not let our parish's workers help in finishing the project.

We would very much like to proceed on the project using volunteer labor, and saving the costs associated with a bank loan. We will have a one year limit to complete construction after we get our building permits. Using volunteer labor and some donated materials, and without the closing costs, appraisal costs, and so on, we could possibly build the entire project for closer to \$300,000. To do this, we would need to find a way to raise this money in advance. We seek the help of any donors wishing to aid the cause of Russian Orthodoxy in Salt Lake City with their financial gifts, or someone who could provide a loan independent of the bank that we could also pay off over time. May God richly bless all who help in this holy work.

Thanksgiving Day

Although it is not an official Church holiday, the civil holiday of Thanksgiving merits our observation. Often we forget to thank God for His abundant gifts to us. On this day that we spend with our families, let us all find time to gather in Church for a Thanksgiving Liturgy, to begin the day in a holy way. The word "Eucharist" itself has the meaning of Thanksgiving in Greek, so it is especially appropriate to celebrate the Eucharist on this holiday.

Visit of Kursk Icon

From October 17-19, our parish was blessed by the visit of the wonderworking Kurst Root icon of the Mother of God. The icon was accompanied by Archpriest Alexei Kotar, the dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seattle. During the visit, nearly 400 people were able to venerate this icon. About 40 families received the icon in their homes. Additionally, the icon was brought to our future church property, where a cross was placed and the land and home blessed by the visit of the icon.

St. Herman Youth Conference

For youth of ages 15-26, this year's St. Herman West Youth Conference will take place in Sacramento, CA from Dec. 22-26. The cost is \$250, which includes all lodging, meals, and activities. Transportation costs are separate. Registration is at <http://www.sthermans.org/west/>.