



## ***St. John Chrysostom Church***

A Mission of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
[www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org](http://www.stjohnchrysostomchurch.org)

Holding Services at  
15985 S Golden Rd  
Golden, CO 80401

Mailing Address:  
249 S. Buchanan Ave.  
Louisville, CO 80027

Fr. Seraphim Gisetti, Pastor

Phone: 720.938.1302

email: [vrevsg@comcast.net](mailto:vrevsg@comcast.net)

### **October SJCC News**

My Joy in the Lord,

This month we begin our pledge drive for 2009. Further down you will find some thoughts on pledging from me. But here, I just want to say thank you for your support during this first year of ours. Starting a mission is not easy – neither physically nor spiritually nor financially. It calls for sacrifices. Thank you for the sacrifices you have done already and may God inspire to greater ones in the future. By this time of the coming year, we will have a decision to make – to stay where we are or to move. Please add to your prayers that God will bless us with enough people and resources to find our own piece of Colorado to worship Him on. I will not be disappointed if this does not happen, but we have placed this community and its growth and enrichment into the hands of our Lord, and I believe that He will guide us and give us all that we need – not only in the coming year but all the years of our lives. Please join me in asking our Lord and all the saints, especially His mother and our patron, St. John Chrysostom, to open our hearts and souls to His will and the hearts and souls of those around us, as well.

With love, in Christ,  
Fr. Seraphim

#### **Bishop Basil's Visit**

We had a wonderful visit with Bishop Basil. A nice Vespers and potluck and discussion. Thank you everyone for your help and participation.

#### **Antiochian Parishes Community (APC) of Colorado**

The picnic was a huge success. The group intends to continue working together to plan other events as well as next year's picnic.

#### **Diocesan Pilgrimage**

The 2008 Pilgrimage will be to Kearney, Nebraska. I can already hear your “WHAT??? WHERE???” Yes it is to Kearney Nebraska for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the repose of Fr. Nicola Yanney, the first Orthodox priest in the Plains, and the first person ordained by St. Raphael.

#### **Icons needed:**

**In order to facilitate a pleasing visual experience, I would like to have all of the icons from either the same source or two or three compatible sources.** Please do not take upon yourselves to order one of these icons from your favorite bookstore or icon seller. We have a sign-up list in church and will order them at the same time. Each icon is roughly 8" x 10" and costs approximately \$40. We have donations for the icons for the 12 Great Feasts and Pascha and a few others, See the sign-up sheet in church for availability and existing donations.

## **Sister Diocese Project**

The Diocese of Mid-America has undertaken a “Sister Diocese” project with the diocese of Hauran – one of the earliest diocese of the Christian Church. The diocese is currently completely impoverished as it has been war-torn for the last 60 years and under partial occupation for the last 40. The diocese comprises the south-western area of Syria, including the Golan Heights which it has not been permitted to minister in since 1967. Under Bishop Basil's initiative, our diocese has committed to helping fund priests, support church reconstruction projects, and help in any way that we can. Going back to New Testament times, the church in and around Jerusalem was considered special and that our support for their sufferings and needs must be of the highest priority. More information on how you can help is available at the church in both hard and soft (on CD) copies.

We will be starting collections for support of the children this month, there is a sign-up sheet in church. Please sign up either for \$12 per year or \$60 per year. All money will be forwarded to Subdeacon James Kalllai for delivery to Metropolitan Sabba.

## **Pledge Drive**

With October comes the budget planning, and with budget planning comes the Pledge Drive. In the next few weeks you will receive a pledge form at church. Please fill it out carefully. Both Time and Talent and your Financial support are important.

Pledges are just that – Pledges. They are neither installment contracts or unchangeable Promissory Notes. Nor are they license to give less than you can because you promised less.

The start of every pledge is Time and Talent. please look at the choices carefully, you will be asked to follow through on what you pledge – perhaps not all the time and perhaps not every item, but each person will be asked to donate their own personal efforts, not just money

The base of every financial pledge is a tithe. Note that this is from the Old Testament. The new Testament asks for all, every penny – allowing Christians to retain one third or one half for themselves because of the understanding that everything is God's to begin with, and what we receive, even though we think it might come from our employer, actually does come from God, who has put us into that job or that career.

With that said, let me add that if we arbitrarily try to tithe, out of a sense of responsibility or guilt, we will run into trouble. God asks us to be “cheerful” givers, “sacrificial” givers, “hidden” givers. Our giving needs to be enough for us to make changes to the normal way we live – give up certain things (even if only a Starbuck's coffee) for the sake of God, giving, instead, that money to Him.

Note that I say “giving that money to Him”, not “to His Church”. Our pledge and giving to the church should be only a part of what we give. The tithe or whatever percentage we settle on, should include all of our charitable and ecclesiastical giving. Now, in many parishes one starts with a tithe to the church and adds charitable giving on top of that. That's good and I won't complain, but we need to include all of our giving in planning what we shall give. Charity, too, needs to be in our personal budget.

In giving to the church, please start thinking of giving a percentage rather than a fixed amount. Odd numbers, with cents on the check do not bother our Treasurer, nor God, nor me. But it is only by starting to do percentages that we can be on the road to a tithe. If everyone tithed, we will have no financial worries – not ever. If I had my “druthers”, everyone would tithe to the church and tithe to charity, at a minimum! But what I will ask of you is only what you are ready to do – a tithe if you are ready, a percentage if you are not.

But I repeat again, I would rather you underestimate your giving and exceed what you pledge rather than overestimate and give less – whether of time or talent or money.

## ON Confession (Part 5)

### Manner of Confession

Not all Confessions are or should be identical. I don't mean their content, the sins confessed, (which often are repeated over and over and over again) but rather the individual's approach to them and the depth of them.

It used to be the rule that if you went to a monastery or a retreat or a Church Conference, you went to Confession as part of that visit/Retreat/Conference. But since the priest hearing the Confession was not acquainted with your spiritual life, the Confession was focused on one or two things – a general listing of the daily/regular sins and perhaps one or two items might be gone into in depth if you wanted to hear a possible different approach/take on your spiritual struggle. If not, then only a general overview would be confessed, unless there happened to be a priest there to whom you wanted to make an extensive Confession. The same approach was used with your Parish Priest – he was not expected to be more than a person who witnessed your Confession and prayed for Reconciliation.

In depth confessions were reserved for your father Confessor or Spiritual Director – and if you had none – you would make none.

There are many ways of preparing for Confession. I have never found that one is better than another. It is completely individual. However, I have found that using the following grid helps to focus how we make our confession:

	Sins against <b>God</b>	Sins against <b>others</b>	Sins against <b>ourselves</b>
<b>What</b> we have done			
<b>Why</b> we did it			
<b>How</b> can we avoid it in the future?			

Different priests have different traditions of how to confess – one is not necessarily better than another. The tradition that has been handed down to me is:

- Confessions are done in church except in extreme circumstances – Communion of the ill, a person needing to confess and no church is available, a person dying, and so forth.
- The Confession is heard in front of an analogion or table with at least the Cross or the Word of God on it, preferably both.
- The person confessing stands in front of the analogion, facing forward, the priest stands to the side, facing in.
- After the prayers before Confession, (the length of them is determined by the circumstances: whether in conjunction (after) a regular service, or separately at an appointed time), the priest asks: “Is there anything on your heart?”
- The person begins their confession, saying whatever is on their heart and asking help from the priest if they feel that they don't know how to confess well enough.
- The priest, depending on the person and the confession, may either wait and add comments and/or questions until the person has finished, or may interject them as the confession is made.
- The comments and/or questions have one purpose – to make the confession better. So they are focused
- either on clarifying what is being confessed or why the person has trouble with that particular sin, or how it can be avoided in the future. (See the grid above.)
- The priest may make suggestions – that is all they are, not penances or requirements that the person fulfill. If they work, good; if not, tell the priest at the next Confession and he may

suggest something else.

- Before finishing, the priest asks, “Is there anything else on your heart?” (this is asked any number of times, until the person confessing says “No.”)
- Then the person confessing kneels, (or, if incapable of kneeling, simply bows) still facing forward, and the priest place the epitrahelion over their head and places his hands on top of their head and prays the ending prayers of reconciliation to God.
- At the end of the prayers, the priest makes the sign of the cross over the head of the person confessing, and finishes with the words: “And now, having no further care for the sins which you have confessed, go in peace.” or sometimes, simply, “Go in peace.”
- The person rises, making the sign of the cross and venerates the Cross and/or Gospel/Bible and asks a blessing from the priest.

Note that this procedure is followed whether the person confessing is lay, monastic, or clergy (deacon, priest, or bishop). (Yes, even a bishop asks for the blessing of the priest hearing the confession – though there are few priests who understand the depth of humility required to bless a bishop).

### **Penances**

I have given one penance in all my years as a priest – and that was at the request of the person in Confession. It was, also, done after consultation with my Spiritual Father.

Too many priests hand out penances like candy, one for every confessant.

A penance is a task that must be performed before the prayer of reconciliation can be given. They are not acts which must be performed in conjunction with reconciliation. A penance, in the Orthodox Church, has only one function – to help an individual understand the gravity of their sin AND to help that individual make a sharp break with the past. It is supposed to be an overt symbol of their repentance! It is not supposed to be either a punishment or a reflection of their lack of repentance.<sup>11</sup>

The classic tale of a penance comes from the Solovki monastery of Russia. A notorious bandit came to the monastery and asked to become a monk. He was repentant of his life and the evil he had done to many, many others. The hegumen of the monastery, heard his confession and gave him a penance – to go and ask forgiveness from all that he had harmed, or their relatives, if they were dead. It took him at least 4 years (some say 11 years) to complete the penance, and then he returned and became a monk. Note that he had already repented; this was not to teach him repentance or the wrong of what he had been doing! He was already convinced of that. It was to underscore, for the world and for him, the change in his heart.

Note also that this was a murderer – but his Spiritual father did no require him to undergo the full canonical penalty of 20 years without Communion.

St. John Chrysostom writes, “A pastor ought not to inflict penalties or penances proportionately to the sins, but ought to take into consideration also the will of the sinners lest .... in making a hasty attempt to help the fallen one to his feet, he hurl him still farther down. .... a pastor ought to possess a great deal of discretion and countless eyes in order to see the habitude of the soul from all sides.”

St. Nicodemus of the holy Mountain, who compiled the Pedalion (Rudder) writes, “One ought to know that one and the same sin is penanced in some canons for a longer time, and in others for a shorter time, because in proportion to the repentance of a sinner, his penance is prescribed to be severer or lighter.”

<sup>11</sup> I knew a woman who, as a teenager, came to confession and confessed pride in her hair. The priest gave her a penance to cut it off, so that it would not cause her to sin further. It took 50 years before she would come back to the Church – and yes, she did cut it off in obedience.

Note that penances are different from instruction. Every father confessor should give instruction to those who come to him. But these are not penances. First, their completion is not a requirement for the prayer of reconciliation, as is the case with penances, Secondly, the task and the manner of completion and even the decision to undertake the task is completely up to the individual. It is up to the person confessing to decide whether it is something that they feel will benefit them. Very often, a person may not be quite ready to fulfill the suggestion of the Father Confessor. Sometimes the priest thinks that the individual is more ready than they think of themselves. It has, sometimes, been years before a person was actually ready to implement a suggestion I have made. I thought they were ready – but they didn't – and that was the more important reality – their perception of their own Spiritual state. A Father Confessor may get frustrated that their suggestions or recommendations are not being followed, but that is a matter for the priest to deal with – not to take out on the person confessing.

### 2008/2009 Tentative Schedule for the 12 Great Holy Days

#### **November**

21 Fri 6:30 pm Liturgy **Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple**

#### **December**

24 Wed 8:00 am Royal Hours & Vesperal Liturgy Nativity Eve  
10:00 pm Vigil  
Liturgy **Nativity of our Lord**

#### **2009**

#### **January**

6 Tue 6:30 pm Liturgy **Theophany of our Lord**  
and Blessing of Water

#### **February**

1 Sun After Coffee hour Vespers  
2 Mon 6:30 pm Liturgy **Presentation of our Lord**

#### **March**

25 Wed 6:30 pm Vesperal Liturgy **Annunciation to the Theotokos**

#### **August**

6 Fri 6:30 pm Liturgy **Transfiguration of Our Lord**  
15 Sat 9:00 am Liturgy **Dormition of the Theotokos**

#### **September**

8 Tue 6:30 pm Liturgy **Nativity of the Theotokos**  
13 Sun After Coffee hour Vespers  
14 Mon 6:30 pm Liturgy **Elevation of the Cross**

#### **November**

21 Sat 9:00 am Liturgy **Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple**

#### **December**

24 Thu 8:00 am Royal Hours & Vesperal Liturgy Nativity Eve  
10:00 pm Vigil  
Liturgy **Nativity of our Lord**

## Schedule of Services and Events

### October

5	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
8	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 9
9	Thu	7:00 pm	Parish Council meeting (at the Fingers)	
11	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
12	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
15	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 10
18	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
19	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
22	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 10
24	Fri	4:00 pm	<b>Diocesan Pilgrimage to Kearney, NE</b>	
25	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
26	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
29	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 11

### November

1	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
2	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
5	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 11
8	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
9	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
12	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 12
<b>13</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>6:30 pm</b>	<b>Liturgy</b>	<b>St. John Chrysostom</b>
15	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
16	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	
19	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 12
21	Fri	6:30 pm	Liturgy	<b>Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple</b>
22	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
23	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy Followed by <b>Parish Annual Assembly</b>	
26	Wed	7:00 pm	Bible Study	Luke 13
27	Thu	9:00 am	Thanksgiving Day Liturgy	
29	Sat	5:00 pm	Vespers & Discussion	
30	Sun	9:00 am	Liturgy	