Of all lenten hymns and prayers, one short prayer can be termed the lenten prayer. Tradition ascribes it to one of the great teachers of spiritual life: St. Ephrem the Syrian. Here is its text:

**O Lord and Master of my life!**
Take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love.
Yes, Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors and not to judge others.
For You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Read more about the prayer on page 2 ...
Continued from page 1...

This prayer is read twice at the end of each lenten service Monday through Friday. At the first reading, a prostration follows each petition. Then we all bow twelve times saying: “O God, cleanse me a sinner.” The entire prayer is repeated with one final prostration at the end.

Why does this short and simple prayer occupy such an important position in the entire lenten worship? Because it enumerates in a unique way all the “negative” and “positive” elements of repentance and constitutes, so to speak, a “check list” for our individual lenten effort. This effort is aimed first at our liberation from some fundamental spiritual diseases that shape our life and make it virtually impossible for us even to start turning ourselves to God.

The basic disease is sloth. It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us “down” rather than “up” – which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable. It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism that to every spiritual challenge responds “what for?” and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste. It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its very source.

The result of sloth is faint-heartedness. It is the state of despondency that all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for man to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism. It is truly a demonic power in us because the Devil is fundamentally a liar. He lies to man about God and about the world; he fills life with darkness and negation.

Despondency is the suicide of the soul because when man is possessed by it he is absolutely unable to see the light and to desire it.

Lust of power! Strange as it may seem, it is precisely sloth and despondency that fill our life with lust of power. By vitiating the entire attitude toward life and making it meaningless and empty, they force us to seek compensation in, a radically wrong attitude toward other persons. If my life is not oriented toward God, not aimed at eternal values, it will inevitably become selfish and self centered and this means that all other beings will become means of my own self-satisfaction. If God is not the Lord and Master of my life, then I become my own lord and master – the absolute center of my own world, and I begin to evaluate everything in terms of my needs, my ideas, my desires, and my judgments. The lust of power is thus a fundamental depravity in my relationship to other beings, a search for their subordination to me. It is not necessarily expressed in the actual urge to command and to dominate “others.” It may result as well in indifference, contempt, lack of interest, consideration, and respect. It is indeed sloth and despondency directed this time at others; it completes spiritual suicide with spiritual murder.

Finally, idle talk. Of all created beings, man alone has been endowed with the gift of speech. All Fathers see in it the very “seal” of the Divine Image in man because God Himself is revealed as Word (John 1:1). But being the supreme gift, it is by the same token the supreme danger. Being the very expression of man, the means of his self-fulfillment, it is for this very reason the means of his fall and self-destruction, of betrayal and sin. The word saves and the word kills; the
word inspires and the word poisons. The word is the means of Truth and it is the means of demonic Lie. Having an ultimate positive power, it has therefore a tremendous negative power. It truly creates positively or negatively. When deviated from its divine origin and purpose, the word becomes idle. It “enforces” sloth, despondency, and lust of power, and transforms life into hell. It becomes the very power of sin.

These four are thus the negative “objects” of repentance. They are the obstacles to be removed. But God alone can remove them. Hence, the first part of the lenten prayer; this cry from the bottom of human helplessness. Then the prayer moves to the positive aims of repentance, which also are four.

Chastity! If one does not reduce this term, as is so often and erroneously done, only to its sexual connotations, it is understood as the positive counterpart of sloth. The exact and full translation of the Greek sofrōsini and the Russian tselomudriye ought to be wholeness. Sloth is, first of all, dissipation, the brokenness of our vision and energy, the inability to see the whole. Its opposite then is precisely wholeness. If we usually mean by chastity the virtue opposed to sexual depravity, it is because the broken character of our existence is nowhere better manifested than in sexual lust – the alienation of the body from the life and control of the spirit. Christ restores wholeness in us and He does so by restoring in us the true scale of values by leading us back to God.

The first and wonderful fruit of this wholeness or chastity is humility. We already spoke of it. It is above everything else the victory of truth in us, the elimination of all lies in which we usually live. Humility alone is capable of truth, of seeing and accepting things as they are and therefore of seeing God's majesty and goodness and love in everything. This is why we are told that God gives grace to the humble and resists the proud.

Chastity and humility are naturally followed by patience. The “natural” or “fallen” man is impatient, for being blind to himself he is quick to judge and to condemn others. Having but a broken, incomplete, and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas. Being indifferent to everyone except himself, he wants life to be successful right here and now. Patience, however, is truly a divine virtue. God is patient not because He is “indulgent,” but because He sees the depth of all that exists, because the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see, is open to Him. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of God.

Finally, the crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is love – that love which, as we have already said, can be given by God alone—the gift which is the goal of all spiritual preparation and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the lenten prayer in which we ask “to see my own errors and not to judge my brother.” For ultimately there is but one danger: pride. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation, can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we “see our
own errors” and “do not judge our brothers,” when, in other terms, chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy – pride – will be destroyed in us.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations are not limited to the Prayer of St. Ephrem but constitute one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh – the animal, the irrational, the lust in us – over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself “became flesh.” Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man – soul and body – repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the “psycho-somatic” sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the lenten rite par excellence.

Excerpted from Alexander Schmemann, Great Lent: Journey to Pascha (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974).

Parish Council News

The Parish Council met on December 8, 2014.

The treasurer’s report revealed the following balances: Operating $18,463; Money Market (Camp) $76,388; Cunavelis $173,803; Sentinel Doukas $49,387; Festival $4,601; and Community Center $49,709.

The stewardship chairman provided an in-depth report on the stewardship program including the history of stewardship in our parish, the results of stewardship since its inception and the future of the program. The Council thanked Greg Lambesis for his leadership of the stewardship program since its beginning.

The St. Nicholas party resulted in the contribution of approximately $600 to the St. Nicholas shrine. The Council voted to add funding resulting in the donation of $1,000 to the Archdiocese from the parish for the St. Nicholas shrine.

The capital projects committee obtained approval for the hiring of a structural engineer prior to soliciting bids for the construction of a handicapped access to the Church. In addition the committee plans to obtain proposals for the cost of improvements of the community center.

Fr. Ephraim reported that the blessing of the waters on Lake Champlain will take place on January 11 after the liturgy with lunch to follow. He also announced that the parish committee structure in the future will include buildings and grounds, stewardship and parish development, outreach and missions, environment and the internet. Membership on the committees will include both members of the Parish Council and members of the parish as well.
Please note: change in newsletter distribution

The Parish Council has decided, as part of a new environmentally minded policy, that we will change our newsletter's format and distribution to reduce its time, cost, and environmental impact. Starting in January 2015, we will no longer send printed copies of the newsletter except to those who specifically request it. All others will receive an electronic copy only. If you would like a printed copy, please call the church to leave a message at (802) 862-2155 or e-mail Fr. Ephraim: fr.ephraim.ehrs@mail.goarch.org

Thank you and God bless you!
Fr. Ephraim Ehrs, Proistamenos
Philoptochos News & Announcements

The Philoptochos Society is the official philanthropic organization of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Come and join us in doing the charity of our Orthodox Christian faith in this place.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
Our March meeting will be Sunday, March 22, after coffee hour (around 12:30 pm).
Upcoming meetings will be Sunday, April 19, and Sunday, May 3, after coffee hour.

ATTENTION:
Our Spring Bake Sale will be Saturday, March 28. Please come and help us with baking and other preparations.

Tuesday, March 24, 9:30 am: Baklava and Crescent baking
Everyone who can come to help is asked to come.
We need volunteers to come at 9:00 am to help count filo.

Friday, March 27, 10:00 am: Cupping and set-up
Everyone who can come to help is asked to come.

Saturday, March 28, 9:00 am: Final preparations
Please help us plan. Please use the sign-up sheet at church or call Prez Anthe (865-4416) to volunteer to work the line.
Morning: 10–12 pm
Early Afternoon: 12–2 pm
Afternoon: 2–5 pm – typically slow time
Evening: 5–7 pm

Choir Rehearsals for Lent & Pascha

♫ ♬ ♩ ♪ ♪ ♬ ♩ ♪ ♫
If you’d like to join the choir, please come to our rehearsals:
Saturday, March 7, 9:30–11:30 am for Holy Week & Pascha
Thursday, March 26, 7:00–9:00 pm for Palm Sunday & Lamentations (Engomia)
Saturday, April 18, 9:30–11:30 am for Sundays after Pascha & Pentecost

NEED A RIDE TO CHURCH?
COULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE A RIDE TO CHURCH?

Please call Presvytera Anthe (865-4416).
We’ll do our best to match riders with drivers!
Donations for
HOLY WEEK & EASTER

The following items are needed for our Holy Week and Easter services. To make an offering toward any of the items listed below, please complete the form at the bottom of this page and, using the enclosed envelope, either mail it or bring it to church along with your financial donation.

PLEASE NOTE
In order to avoid confusion or duplication, NO PARISHIONERS should order or purchase any item until they have confirmed the donation with Fr. Ephraim at FrEphraimEhrs@mail.goarch.org or (802) 862-2155.

ALL SERVICES
- Candles
- Incense
- Charcoal
- Wine for Holy Communion

HOLY FRIDAY APOKATHELOSIS
- White sheet
- Rose petals

HOLY FRIDAY ENGOMIA
- Rose water
- Flowers for the tomb
- Baskets for Myrrhbearers

PALM SUNDAY
- Palms

HOLY WEDNESDAY
- Holy Unction supplies (donated)
- Flowers

HOLY THURSDAY
- Eggs to dye, tulle & ribbon
- Crown

HOLY FRIDAY APOKATHELOSIS
- White sheet
- Rose petals

HOLY SATURDAY
- Laurel leaves
- Rose petals

EASTER SUNDAY
- Lilies
- Wreath

Thank you for your generous stewardship!

Enclosed is my donation of $ __________ as an offering toward the purchase of _____________________________________________ for the Holy Week & Easter services of our parish.

Name ______________________________

Address ________________________________________________________________

City, State, ZIP ________________________________

Telephone ______________ E-mail ________________________________

Please use the enclosed envelope and bring or mail your donation to
Dormition Greek Orthodox Church
PO Box 8122
Burlington, VT 05402-8122
Palm Sunday, Holy Week & Pascha
2015 Schedule

April 4  Saturday of Lazarus
9:00 am  Orthros
10:00 am Liturgy
11:00 am Youth retreat and palm folding (all ages)
5:00 pm  Vespers

April 5  Palm Sunday
9:00 am  Orthros
10:00 am Liturgy with blessing of the palms, followed by Parish Council fish luncheon
6:30 pm  Orthros for Monday & Bridegroom (Nymphios) service

April 6  Holy Monday
6:30 pm  Orthros for Tuesday & Bridegroom (Nymphios) service

April 7  Holy Tuesday
6:30 pm  Orthros for Wednesday & Bridegroom (Nymphios) service

April 8  Holy Wednesday
4:00 pm  Service of Holy Unction
6:30 pm  Orthros for Thursday & Bridegroom (Nymphios) service, followed by Holy Unction

April 9  Holy Thursday
9:00 am  Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil
6:30 pm  Orthros for Friday & reading of the Twelve Gospels

April 10  Holy Friday
9:00 am  Royal Hours & kouvouklion decoration
3:00 pm  Vespers & Un-nailing (Apokathelosis)
6:30 pm  Orthros for Saturday & Lamentations (Engomia), with Myrrhbearers

April 11  Holy Saturday
9:00 am  Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil for Pascha
11:30 pm  Orthros for Pascha, followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Resurrection / Anastasi service), and then light refreshments

April 12  Great and Holy Pascha
1:00 pm  Vespers of Agape

April 19  Thomas Sunday
9:00 am  Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy, followed by egg hunt & luncheon hosted by Parish Council
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<td>LAZARUS SATURDAY 9:00 am – Orthros 10:00 am – Liturgy 11:00 am – Youth retreat &amp; palm folding (all ages) 5:00 pm – Vespers</td>
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