

St Nicholas Bulletin--March & Holy Week/Pascha

St. Maria Skobtsova is an excellent example for all of us. She was a person of the world, who became a martyr during World War II, and is today a saint. I feel it very appropriate to use her as an example for all of us during Great Lent when we are all striving to do better. Learn from this modern day hero, not a remote 4th or 6th or 10th century saint, but a 20th century saint.

Born into a well-to-do, upper class family in 1891 in Latvia, she was given the name Elizaveta, with the family name Pilenko. Her father died when she was a teenager and she became an atheist shortly thereafter. In 1906, her mother moved the family back to St. Petersburg. Liza, as she preferred to be called, became involved in radical intellectual circles. In 1910, she married a Bolshevik by the name of Dimitry Kuzmin-Karaviev. They had a daughter. During this time she became more and more involved in literary circles and wrote poetry and even her first book. Liza's life was much like the lives of the intellectual hippies of the 1950's and 1960's. In 1913, Liza and Dimitry divorced. Soon she took her daughter and moved to Anapa in Southern Russia, where in 1918, she was elected mayor. She was tried by the White Army for being a Bolshevik, but the judge, Daniel Skobotsov, who had taught Liza when she was a schoolgirl felt some affection for her and acquitted her. Shortly thereafter they married.

The political tide began to turn again, so in order to avoid danger, a pregnant Liza and her family and mother fled to Georgia, then to Yugoslavia, finally immigrating to Paris in 1923. By this time Liza had begun to embrace Orthodoxy and became active in the Orthodox Youth Movement which was very active helping Russian émigrés. Although a mother of three, she found time to dedicate herself to theological studies and social work. Her second marriage fell apart, and Liza once again found herself divorced. She became more and more active in the church and with social work. The bishop encouraged her to become a nun. Hard living Liza who smoked and enjoyed an occasional drink, a nun? She told the bishop she did not want to live in a monastery and wanted to continue her work among the people. The bishop assured her she did not need to live secluded from the world, so in 1932, twice divorced and the mother of three, Liza became a nun and was given the name Maria. Mother Maria rented a large house in Paris which became her 'convent'. The famous Russian theologian, Fr. Sergei Bulgakov became her confessor and spiritual guide. Mother Maria's house became a haven for refugees, the needy and lonely, as well as a center for intellectual and theological discussion. In Mother Maria these two elements - service to the poor and the intellectual study of theology – went hand in hand.

When the Nazis took Paris in World War II, Jews approached Mother Maria for Baptismal Certificates so they could escape. She also made a deal with the garbage men of Paris, where she would take Jewish children and hide them in garbage cans. Then they would be sent out with the trash collectors and taken to safety. To this day, Mother Maria is honored in Israel for all her unselfish acts. As the war progressed, Mother Maria's convent-house was closed down. Along with other activists she was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. Although she was elderly, she had to endure daily strenuous walks for many miles, and to do difficult labor. Mother Maria also made church vestments and altar cloths out of whatever materials she could get her hands on so that Orthodox services could be held in the camp. Although becoming weak and frail, she fought to live so she could continue her work. Mother Maria became an inspiration to all.

Because the exact hour of her death is not known, Mother Maria was gassed in the Ravensbruck gas chamber either Good Friday or Holy Saturday, 1945. She had asked that the life of a young Jewish girl be

spared, and Mother Maria took her place. She was glorified by an act of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on January 16, 2004. Her glorification, and that of the other Orthodox who had been arrested with her (including her son) took place at the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky in Paris, May 1-2, 2004. She is now known as the Holy and Glorious Venerable Martyr Maria Skobtsova, Saint Marie of Paris, Holy Mother Maria of Ravensbruck. She encouraged hospitality and love of one's neighbor which she considered to be the foundation of the Gospel, and she embodied this in her life.

St. Maria, who continued to enjoy her cigarettes, and an occasional drink, even as a nun, said that we Orthodox sometimes get it all wrong: for when we stand at the Dread Judgment Seat of Christ, He is not going to ask us how many poklons (prostrations) we have made in our lifetime but how many people we helped, how much we sacrificed for others, and what we did for the Church and our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. My dear Spiritual Children, this is the core of what Great Lent represents. Surely we can learn from St. Maria Skobtsova who was so very human like us, and yet became a saint of God.

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Please bring your children for the **Palm Sunday procession** with icons following Liturgy.

If **your child turns 7** by this month, please see Fr. Kirrill or Jennifer in Sunday School for **First Confession** sign-up.

Kulich \$15 = order now. If enough people are interested, a small 'Sirnaya Pascha' will be offered for sale also. See **Shoppe St. Nicholas** for **Pascha cards**, and **egg decorations**.

Collected in February: **Renovation Fund \$2,050 Church School \$52 Pancake Breakfast \$610 Raffle \$340 Car Wash \$145**

New Additions to Angel Fund: Already Seraphim, **Andrew & Julie Moore & Family** have added to their original kind donation! A new **Anonymous** is also a Seraphim. **Roman Pokrovskii** (Chelsea Restaurant), and **Yuri & Ia Zagvazdin** are Cherubim. **Virinea Biondi** is an Angel's Friend. Thank you!

Reminder to come to **Confession**, before or after any Lenten service!

Don't forget the **remainder** of **Lenten Services**:

March 21 (Sat.) **Soul (Ancestral) Saturday**, Liturgy 10AM. Bring your commemorations. **March 24th** (Tues.) Evening Divine Liturgy 7PM, **Feast of the Annunciation**. **March 27**, (Fri.) **Akathist to the Virgin Mary**. **April 1** (Wed.) **Canon of Andrew of Crete/Mary of Egypt**. **April 3** (Fri.) **Final Akathist to the Virgin Mary**. **April 8** (Wed.) 7PM **Final Presanctified Liturgy**. **April 11** (Sat.) 10AM Liturgy, **Lazarus Saturday**. Sunday **April 12th** is **Palm Sunday**.

If you are receiving **Communion** at a **Presanctified Liturgy**, please **abstain** from food, drink and smoking from **noon**, unless you are elderly, pregnant, ill or taking medication. All Orthodox Christians must come to **Confession at least once before Pascha!**

Do not leave Church until Liturgy is over. It is rude to leave after Communion and you may miss important announcements as well as receiving the final blessing. On Pascha you will miss out on getting the traditional red egg!

No kneeling from Pascha night until the Kneeling prayers of Pentecost, June 7.

Collection for Pascha flowers continues. Volunteers needed to decorate for Pascha!

Contemporary American society is very casual in its approach to life and especially dress. Younger generations have all but forgotten what **'Sunday best'** clothes means. Much of **church etiquette**, and that includes actions and dress, is based on **common sense** (also something we are lacking a good deal of the time). Not only should one **dress modestly** for church, **but neatly** and in good clothes. This is especially true for Pascha when, if we can, we should wear something new and in a light color - no black or dark colors carried from Holy Week. Always remember, you are in church to worship God. If you come to church with the 'fear of God and with faith and love' you can't go wrong: you will automatically have good etiquette. (Frs. Konev and Gvosdev)

Holy Week is important because it commemorates the events of **Christ's final days** and His Passion. This includes the Institution of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) where Jesus Himself said, 'Eat My Body and Drink My Blood', and the Crucifixion. Obviously, these are important in many ways, especially in terms of the reconciliation of God and humanity. Holy Week commemorates these most important events, and is therefore **a very busy time** in the life of the Church. It does indeed seem strange to many that those who are Orthodox go to Church so much during Holy Week. Holy Week is the week prior to Pascha, and is the week following Palm Sunday, the day we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. **The entire week** celebrates the final days of Jesus' Life, and then culminates in the greatest festival of the Orthodox year: Pascha, Jesus' Resurrection. So yes, Holy Week is very busy for us Orthodox. In fact, it should be busy. In the ancient Church the entire lives of Christians revolved around the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Christians risked, torture and death in order to worship. Today we often find that even though we give **'lip service'** to the importance of our faith, Orthodoxy still takes a **back seat** to most secular endeavors. Family get-togethers, jobs, TV time, meetings, and a whole host of other things stop us from coming to church. Many probably secretly wonder why God expects them to even worship Him on Sundays, let alone all the extra services of Lent and Holy Week, seeing how modern life is so crowded with very important events like extra-curricular activities. In the early Church, Christians' lives were based around the feasts of the Church and **these services trumped any secular engagement** that might occur. In many ways, our culture wishes to dumb down meaningful events, and make things easier to do. In this type of culture, Holy Week is usually the first to go.

Holy Week is challenging: it is time consuming. In our modern culture, it's difficult to fast, to attend all those services. It's tiring. Even if we go to only some of the services, it's at least 3, 4, 5, 6 or even 7 days spent in church in a row. However, following Jesus' suffering sometimes requires **a lack of comfort to us** as well. However, the mild discomfort we may face in our rich, Western culture is nowhere near the discomfort Jesus and his early followers often faced. I guess that many of us give our all to the Resurrection raising our voices to shout **ХРИСТОС БОЖКРЕЧЕ! CHRIST IS RISEN!** But do we show it in our lives? The devotion required for Holy Week is strange from a secular standpoint. Why would anybody give up all that time to **GO TO CHURCH?** As Orthodox however, such worship and celebration is not strange at all, or shouldn't be, especially since we believe Jesus not merely *lived*, a long time ago but because He lives and suffers TODAY during Holy Week and Rises from the Dead on Pascha...not something from a long time ago, but NOW as we live it. Therefore giving our time to celebrate and worship God, even when it is not convenient, is the normal response to God's love for us. I **plead** with

you to come to as many services as possible this Holy Week. **Make the time to come, to be a little uncomfortable for Jesus sake. Otherwise what can Pascha really mean to you????** Fr Kirrill

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Holy Monday/Holy Tuesday April 13 & 14th, Bridegroom Service 7PM.

Holy Wednesday April 15th, Holy Unction Service 7PM.

Holy Thursday April 16, 10AM Liturgy, Institution of Eucharist by Jesus...do this in Memory of Me. No Cherubic Hymn sung on this day, instead: Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God accept me today as a Communicant... Holy & Great Thursday evening 7PM, Reading of 12 Passion Gospels.

Holy & Great Friday, April 17, 1PM Vespers, Taking out of the Plashteneetsa (burial of Christ). Holy & Great Friday evening 7PM, Lamentations at the Tomb.

Holy & Great Saturday, April 18, 10AM, Liturgy of St. Basil. Preparation for Pascha.

Saturday Night, April 18th, 11:30PM to 2AM PASCHA. Rush Service, Midnight Procession, Liturgy. Distribution of eggs.

Sunday, April 19th PASCHA, 1PM Vespers for children and others who did not come at night.

Reminder, no kneeling.

Blessing of Pascha Baskets following Liturgy Pascha night or following Vespers, Sunday.

If you wish to participate, bring food to share after Liturgy Pascha night, in the hall, donation for drinks and other goodies.

Liturgy every Sunday 10AM (EXCEPT ON Pascha.).

Note: Joy Day (Radjineetsa) Tuesday April 28th the day to remember our ancestors and wish them Christ is Risen! 7PM, Panikhida. Bring your commemoration papers or books.

A quick reminder candy is being sold every Sunday and Pascha baskets will be sold beginning the middle of Lent.

Is anyone traveling to Russia? Shoppe St. Nicholas needs Pascha cards AND Christmas cards. Please see Fr. Kirrill.

XPICTOC BOCKPECE! CHRIST IS RISEN