

HOLY ASCENSION PARISH

SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

THE HOLY ASCENSION ORTHODOX CHURCH
is the Washington, DC, parish of the Russian Orthodox Church
Abroad (ROCA), under the *omophor* (or the conciliar leadership) of
Metropolitan Agafangel (Pashkovsky), Bishop of Odessa & Taurida.
The Holy Ascension Parish was organized on Ascension Day, 17
May 2007.

BISHOPS & LOCAL CLERGY

✠ Metropolitan Agafangel, Bishop of Odessa & Taurida, and First
Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad ✠ Andronik,
Archbishop of Ottawa & North America ✠ Bishop Joseph
(Hrebinka), Bishop of Washington ✠ Michael Foster, deacon ✠
Seraphim Englehardt, subdeacon ✠ John Hinton, subdeacon ✠
Daniel Olson, reader & choir director ✠

ADDRESS

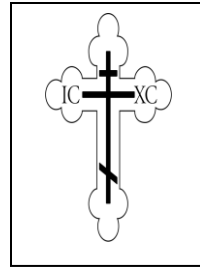
500 West Annandale Road, Falls Church VA 22307

☎ 703.539.9445 ☐ www.holyascension.info

PART 1. OUR PARISH

The Holy Ascension parish welcomes all Orthodox people to its sacraments and all people with an interest in Christianity and the abiding Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church. The immediate Holy Ascension parish background is Russian émigré with many English-speaking converts. Members, visitors, and people in touch online come from all ethnicities. The Church is One.

<http://ruschurchabroad.com/engindex.htm>
<http://ruschurchabroad.com/>
<http://www.holyascension.info/>



PART 2. EVENTS OF AUGUST.

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN AGAFANGEL VISITS SOUTH AMERICA

Metropolitan Agafangel arrived on July 30, 2009, at the airport in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he was met by the Most Reverend Ambrose, Bishop of Methone (Old Calendar Greek Church), who had arrived earlier, the Most Reverend Sofroniy, Archbishop of St. Petersburg and Northern Russia, Archpriest George Petrenko, Administrator of the South American Administrative District, Archpriest Constantine Bussyguin, Rector of the Church of St. Nicholas, and some of his



parishioners, and Protodeacon Vasiliy Yakimov, from Australia.

On Saturday, August 1, 2009, on the feast day of St. Seraphim of Sarov, they served in the newly renovated church in the city of Carapicuibá. This was the feast day of that church and the first service there, since the renovation of the church and the construction of a new iconostasis were complete. A *trapeza* was held after the service.

PART 3. FINDING A NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR THE HOLY ASCENSION PARISH

Work continues on completing the purchase of the property on University Drive in Fairfax City. Much progress has been made and we hope we will be able to finish the process soon.

More news as it becomes available.

Thank You,
Dimitri Gontscharow
Church Warden

PART 4. SEPTEMBER LITURGIES BY CIVIL CALENDAR DATE

All Sunday Liturgies begin at 10:00 AM. A luncheon buffet follows all Sunday liturgies. Volunteers may offer to help with luncheon fare by cooking food at home and by preparation and service at the church.

Currently a regular schedule also designates a family that is responsible for cleaning the church after the services. The duty is for one month at a time. If you wish to volunteer, please see the warden/*starosta*, Mr. Gontscharow.

On many Saturday afternoons a BIBLE STUDY GROUP meets at 3:30 PM, chaired by Bishop Joseph. Please check beforehand with the church office, to be sure that the study group will meet on any specific day.

Bishop Joseph also serves an *akathist* every Wednesday at 7 PM at the church, praying for God's help in finding new premises for our church. Parish members also read *akathists* at home, praying to find a new parish home.

Saturday, September 5, Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, September 6, The 13th Sunday After Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. HIEROMARTYR EUTYCHES.

Thursday, September 10, Vigil at 6 pm.

Friday, September 11, BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 AM.

Saturday, September 12, Vigil at 5 pm.

Sunday, September 13. The 14th Sunday After Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. DEPOSITION OF THE CINCTURE OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS.

Saturday, September 19, Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, September 20, The 15th Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS. MARTYR SOZON.

Sunday, September 20, Vigil at 5 PM.

Monday, September 21, NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 PM.

Saturday, September 26, Vigil & the Bringing Out of the Holy Cross at 5 PM.

Sunday, September 27, the 16th Sunday After Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS OF THE LORD.

Saturday, October 3, Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, October 4, the 17th Sunday After Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. APODOSIS OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

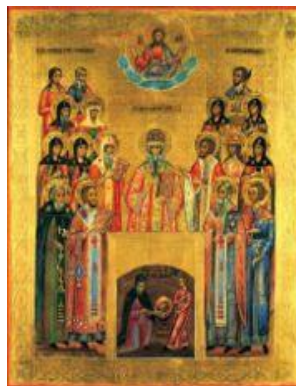
FALLS CHURCH FESTIVAL

The festival will take place in the city center on Saturday, September 12, 2009, from 10 to 4, rain or shine. We will take the opportunity to have a book sale at the same time in front of our building. If you can help, please contact Phil Rapp or Dimitri Gontscharow.

PART 5. FEAST OF THE BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Bible portrays the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist by King Herod Antipas. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Herod had imprisoned John because he reproved Herod for divorcing his wife (Phasaelis), and unlawfully taking his brother Herod Philip the First's wife, Herodias. On Herod's birthday, the dancing of Herodias's daughter (traditionally called Salome) pleased Herod so much that in his drunkenness he promised to give her anything she desired, up to half of his kingdom. When the daughter asked her mother what she should request, she was told to ask for the head of St John the Baptist on a platter. Although Herod was appalled by the request, he reluctantly agreed and had St John put to death in the prison.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus also relates in his *Antiquities of the Jews* that King Herod killed St John, stating that he did so, "lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his [John's] power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise), [so Herod] thought it best [to put] him to death." He further states that many of the Jews believed that the military disaster which fell upon Herod at the hands of Aretas his father-in-law (Phasaelis' father), was God's punishment for his unrighteous behavior.



THIRD FINDING OF THE HEAD OF ST
JOHN THE FORERUNNER

The liturgical commemoration of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist is almost as old as that commemorating his Nativity, which is

one of the oldest feasts, if not the oldest feast, introduced into the Eastern liturgies to honor a saint.

The Orthodox churches celebrate this feast on August 29 (September 11 in the civil calendar). The day is always observed as a day of fasting, even if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday (in which case the fast is lessened, but never entirely abrogated).

PART 6. FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS.

The Nativity of the Theotokos, celebrating the birth of St Mary, is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox liturgical year, celebrated on September 8 in the Julian calendar (September 21 in the civil calendar).

According to the sacred tradition of the Orthodox Church, St Mary was born to elderly and previously barren parents Sts Joachim and Anna, in answer to their prayers.

Orthodox Christianity does not accept the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (according to which St Mary, like her Son Jesus himself, was preserved from that original or ancestral sin that befalls all other descendants of Adam and Eve, in anticipation of her giving birth to the sinless Christ). The Orthodox Church does not share the Western, Augustinian understanding of the transmission of original sin, so the question does not even arise in Orthodox theology. All Orthodox agree that St Mary was kept free from actual sin by God's grace, and that she was cleansed from the stain of ancestral sin only at the time of the Annunciation, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her (*Luke 1:35*)



NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS.
ST ANNE AT LEFT, ST JOACHIM AT
RIGHT, & NURSEMAID AND CHILD AT
CENTER

PART 7. FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

In Orthodox practice, the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Creating Cross commemorates both the finding of the True Cross in 326 and its recovery from the Persians in 628, and is

considered to be one of the Great Feasts of the church year. September 14 is always a fast day, even if it falls on Saturday or Sunday, and the eating of meat, dairy products and fish is prohibited. The Feast of the Exaltation has a one-day Forefeast and an eight-day Afterfeast. The Saturday and Sunday before and after September 14 are also commemorated with special Epistle and Gospel readings about the Cross at Divine Liturgy. During the All-Night Vigil on the Eve of the Feast, a cross is placed on the Holy Table (altar) where it reposes during the Vigil. The cross is placed on a tray that has been covered with an Aër (liturgical veil) and decorated with fresh basil leaves and flowers, and a candle burns before it. The cross reposes on the "High Place" of the Holy Table, where the Gospel Book normally lies. Those portions of the Vigil that would normally take place before the Icon of the Feast (the chanting of the Polyeleos and the Matins Gospel) instead take place in front of the Holy Table.

One of the high points of the celebration is when, after the Great Doxology, the priest or bishop brings the Cross out of the sanctuary. He sets the cross on a table (*tetrapod* or *analogion*) in the center of the temple (nave of the church) as the choir sings of the festal Troparion of the Cross: *Save, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, granting unto Orthodox Christians [sometimes translated as Christians of the true faith] victory over enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross, do Thou preserve Thy Commonwealth.*

In cathedrals and monasteries, a special "Exaltation" is performed by the bishop or abbot, standing in the center of the church. This consists of his taking the cross in his hands and raising it above his head. He makes an exclamation, to which the choir responds, chanting, *Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)* 100 times. As they chant, he makes the sign of the cross with it three times, then slowly bows down to the ground, and stands up again raising the cross above his head as before. This process is repeated four more times to the four points of the compass.



SAINT HELENA AND BISHOP MACARIUS OF JERUSALEM
ADORE THE HOLY CROSS

Then, whether the special Exaltation has been performed or not, the clergy and congregation prostrate themselves on the ground as all sing, *Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify three times* (at the words *Thy holy Resurrection* all stand up again). Then all come forward to venerate the cross and receive the priest's blessing. During the veneration, the choir chants *stichera* attributed to the

Emperor Leo.

The cross will remain in the center of the temple throughout the Afterfeast, and the faithful will venerate it whenever they enter or leave the church. Finally, on the Apodosis of the Feast, the priest and deacon will cense around the cross, there will be a final veneration of the cross, and then they will solemnly bring the cross back into the sanctuary through the Holy Doors. This same pattern of bringing out the cross, veneration, and returning the cross at the end of the celebration is repeated at a number of the lesser Feasts of the Holy Cross.



RUSSIAN ICON OF THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS,
FROM YAROSLAVL, WRITTEN BY GURY NIKITIN, 1680.

Please report difficulties with newsletter distribution and, by all means, report newsletter corrections to the newsletter preparer, Patrick Brown ~ hpcjfbrown@cox.net.