

SAINT MATTHEW'S ORTHODOX CHURCH BULLETIN

24TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Fasting

Jesus Himself fasted and taught His disciples to fast.

And when you fast, do not look dismal like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men, but your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Mt 6.16-18).

The purpose of fasting is to gain mastery over oneself and to conquer the passions of the flesh. It is to liberate oneself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God. It is to give power to the soul so that it would not yield to temptation and sin. According to Saint Seraphim, fasting is an "indispensable means" of gaining the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life (cf. Conversation with Motovilov), and Jesus Himself taught that some forms of evil cannot be conquered without it (Mt 17.21, Mk 9.29).

Man does not fast because it pleases God if His servants do not eat, for, as the lenten hymns of the Church remind us, "the devil also never eats" (Lenten Triodion). Neither do men fast in order to afflict themselves with suffering and pain, for God has no pleasure in the discomfort of His people. Neither do men fast with the idea that their hunger and thirst can somehow serve as a "reparation" for their sins. Such an understanding is never given in the scriptures or the writings of the saints which claim that there is no "reparation" for man's sin but the crucifixion of Christ. Salvation is a "free gift of God" which no "works" of man can accomplish of merit (cf. Rom 5.15-17, Eph 2.8-9).

Men fast, therefore, and must fast, only to be delivered from carnal passions so that the free gift of salvation in Christ might produce great fruit in their lives. Men fast so that they might more effectively serve God who loves them and has saved them in Christ and the Spirit. Fasting without effort in virtue is wholly in vain.

Why have we fasted, and Thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and Thou takest no knowledge of it?

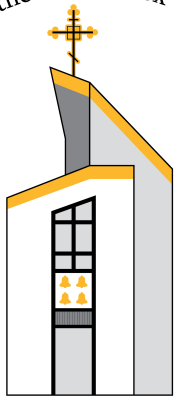
Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and fight ... Fasting like yours ... will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness ... to let the oppressed go free ... is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them ...

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall protect you. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; then you shall cry, and He will say: Here I am (Is 58.3-9).

From Father Thomas Hopko

St. Matthew Orthodox Church



Green Bay, WI

Upcoming...

Liturgical Schedule...

- Sat, 18 Nov, 5:30pm
Great Vespers
- Sun 19 Nov, 9:30am
Divine Liturgy
- Mon, 20 Nov, 6pm
Vigil
- Tue, 21 Nov, 9:30am
Divine Liturgy

Entrance of the Theotokos

Calendar...

Parish Council

- Next Meeting
19 Nov after fellowship

Mission Team

- Next meeting
18 Nov 4:15pm

Choir Practice

- Next practice TBD

Classes...

Bible study, *The Gospel of Luke* TBD.