

# St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church

Issaquah, WA

Priest's Greeting – April 2007

CHRIST IS RISEN!

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our lenten journey has ended with the celebration of the Feast of feasts. But has our fasting really ended? To answer this question, we have to first ask why were we fasting? Hopefully, we were fasting to improve our spiritual well being.

Shouldn't our whole life be one of continuous fasting? If we understand fasting we know that it does not just deal with avoidance of certain food as a physical discipline of the body, but it is also a way of life that reminds us that we should not be controlled by our passions - especially (arrogant) pride - and that we should live moderately. Most of all, in everything we do, we need to pay close attention to our relationships – what we think about someone, say to someone and/or do to someone. In affect, we should love each other as God loves us. Christ wouldn't have died on the Cross for us if He didn't love us. Are we ready to hang on the Cross for others? How willing are we to sacrifice ourselves?

Our responsibility to be servants starts with our immediate family members and then others around us. In fact, everyone is important and as Metropolitan Bloom once said, "The most important person in your life is the person with whom you are interacting right this minute."

We cannot be neglectful of someone's feelings, but at the same time, with godly love, we need to also try and bring people to God. We bring people to God by way of our behavior with the starting place in the home. We have to ask ourselves how we teach our children about God. If we are impatient and angry with them, have we brought them to God or have we demonstrated our hypocrisy – saying we believe in God who represents love and yet we don't express His love.

Every interaction we have with others should be with love and understanding in our hearts. If we wish to reprove someone, let's love them first so our counsel to them will be beneficial for the salvation of their souls. Most importantly, let's not be critical of each other; rather forgive each other constantly. As St. John Chrysostom says in his Paschal epistle, "...everyone is welcome, whether they are early or late..." Everyone means everyone. There is no discrimination in God's eyes. This statement reminds us that we should not complain about what someone does or does not do. Are we more perfect than someone else?

No, your fasting has not ended my dear Brothers and Sisters. It has just begun. Every Lenten period is just a booster to keep us on that road toward God. So do not compare yourself with others; just be able to say, "I'm still on the path toward God and have not digressed."

Christ has shown us that this path is obtained and maintained by the way of the Cross. Let's all take up our Cross and follow the Savior of our souls.

INDEED HE IS RISEN!

With love in Christ,

Fr. Ilija Balach, parish priest