

## **St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church**

Issaquah, WA

Priest's Greeting – May 2007

*You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, granting joy to Your Disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing, they were assured that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world! (Tropar of the Feast of the Ascension)*

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In between the raindrops we see plants sprouting, flowers budding and freshness in the air that only springtime brings. Isn't it a wonderful creation that God has given us! This time of year also happens to be the period between Pascha and Pentecost with the Feast of the Ascension in between. It is a time of rejoicing as we continue to greet each other with "Christ is Risen" up until the Feast of the Ascension. At the same time we are experiencing a physical and spiritual resurrection. The seeds have been planted in the ground and "died" so that life can sprout, just as Christ died and lay in a tomb and then revealed His resurrection.

Yes, there is life after death and God reminds us of this every day when we see the beauty around us. Yes, among the bad and ugly of this world there is goodness and beauty. We might have difficulty seeing the best part, but maybe we are too wrapped up in this world and that makes us focus only on the worldly life. By spending more time in prayer, fasting and doing charitable works we begin to have another outlook. We can't help but become more "spiritual" which is more important for us in the long run.

Everyone enjoys either working in the garden or walking through a garden. What a refreshing experience this is. It is just a glimpse of what is awaiting us in God's Heavenly Kingdom. Our life's journey is full of struggles and we keep trying to achieve something better in our lives, which is perfectly normal. I'm afraid, though, that much of our effort to "ascend the heights" is directed toward our physical well being.

The question we have to ask ourselves is: are we ascending spiritually or not? A good measure of this would be to compare the time spent on physical endeavors versus spiritual endeavors. Are the two aspects of our being in balance or not?

When we look around us we can't help but be in awe of the natural order that God has created – everything is in balance as long as people don't upset this balance. There are many examples of what can happen if the environment isn't taken care of – in affect if we are not good stewards of God's creation. Our being – body, mind and soul – is also a creation of God. Are we being good stewards toward ourselves?

An ascent is a wonderful thing – an accomplishment. Let's strive to prepare ourselves for that final ascent. Let's not neglect our obligations both physically and spiritually for the sake of our souls and those around us.

With love in Christ,

Fr. Ilija Balach, parish priest