

**ST. SAVA SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**ISSAQUAH, WA**  
**PRIEST'S GREETING – SEPTEMBER 2008**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I trust that your summer was enjoyable, especially for your children. Although we adults continue in our normal routine, our children are preparing to get back into a more disciplined routine of going back to school. In as much as going back to public school is important, it is even more important to start coming back to church on a more regular basis. In addition to worshipping God, studying our Orthodox Faith will give us a foundation for a way of life that brings positive results. In addition to children's Christian Education, I am hopeful that adults will be interested enough for us to start adult classes.

It is so easy to get wrapped up with activities at home and work that we forget that worshipping God, praying, fasting, coming to confession and receiving Holy Communion are also activities that should be part of our normal routine. Unfortunately, that is a difficult habit to develop as evidenced by the poor church attendance during the summer. However, this can be overcome if we reorient our priorities.

I have been sending out daily readings of the Scriptures and lives of saints by email with the intent of everyone developing a habit of connecting with God in a simple way. This is just a beginning, but every journey has a beginning. An awareness of God in our lives requires us to not be influenced by the world and its practices, but be influenced by what the Church teaches.

There are many examples of how the world impacts our lives from the simple to the complex. A simple example would be the wearing of wedding rings. In the Orthodox Church we are married with rings on the right ring finger, and yet because non-Orthodox wear their rings on the left ring finger some Orthodox people are compelled to switch their rings to the left hand so they can conform to society. Why is this necessary?

A more complex example is cremation. For many reasons people knowing or not knowing the teaching of the Church insist that they want to be cremated. If our soul is in question, why would we want to jeopardize its salvation for a non-Godly rationale?

There are many other examples, but suffice it to say that the fundamental problem is that we are reluctant to be submissive to God because we look at this "submissiveness" as something negative. However, it is not negative but rather is quite positive. For you who are parents, you understand the difficulty in raising children when they tend to be disobedient. Yet, your intentions are to raise them so they can be prepared for life. It is no different in our relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. Because He loves us, He only wants what is best for us. If we choose not to accept that Godly advice, then we suffer the consequences.

A Godly way of life starts with a personal resolution that we trust the Lord and have nothing to fear. Our role is to be obedient as His children. With the Church New Year on September 14, let's make it a better year with the hope that our relationship with God will be restored and rejuvenated.

Your servant in Christ,

***Fr. Ilija Balach***

September 2008