



From Father Anthony

What do Orthodox Christians believe about Heaven?

Heaven refers to being with God eternally in a state of perfection, light, joy and praise of God. It is hard for us to comprehend what this will be like because we are used to understanding goodness by its contrast with bad. For example, a dinner of a hamburger in a royal palace may not seem like much, but if you have been lost in the wilderness for a week and are offered a hamburger it will seem like a meal fit for a king. In the same way when we read that we will spend eternity praising and glorifying God, we may compare it to the experience of a child sitting through long services in a language he does not understand. It is hard to get excited about that prospect. We have to look at another perspective to comprehend what it will be like. St. Paul recounts his own experience when he says in the book of 2 Cor. 12:2-4 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” His experience was so totally different than anything he had experienced before that he could not relate it to anything on earth; it would not do justice. We do have examples of saints who have experienced ‘the Uncreated Light’. This is the equivalent of being in Paradise while still in the body. It is an experience of over whelming joy and light and peace according to their accounts. However it is temporary; it does not last. It is just a taste of heaven. Since heaven is being with God, it is an experience that begins here on earth. God is with us in our prayers, when we worship Him in the Divine Liturgy, when we receive His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. But this is only a taste of what is to come. In 1 Cor. 13:10-12 we read “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part but then I shall know just as I also am known.” In the priestly prayers of thanksgiving following the reception of Holy Communion the priest prays “Great and most Holy Pascha, wisdom, word and power of God, grant that we may partake of you more perfectly in the unwanning day of your Kingdom.” This again indicates that our experience of Heaven here on Earth is only a partial experience, yet none the less real one. The same must be said of Hell or separation from God. It begins here on earth as we deny God and refuse to let Him into our lives. Some have said that Heaven and Hell are the same place being in God’s presence of light, but to one it is unbearable torture and the other it is beauty and light and joy. It all depends what God has meant to you in this life.

Fr. Anthony

Getting the most out of Lent and preparing for Easter

It has become a mainstream event in our culture to sculpt the body through exercise, diet and plastic surgery. There is even a T.V. show named after this process, but I am afraid I can not critique it because I have never seen it. Let's just say that Hollywood has so effectively exported their specific neurosis that now mainstream America is buying in. Body sculpting although painful in the short run seems relatively easy. If you do not like your looks they can be changed with a black pen and diagram showing the doctor where to nip and tuck. A remarkable concept to be sure. But why are we so concerned about changing our body and willing to invest thousands of dollars to do it, but seemingly nonchalant when it comes to shaping our souls. Some may even question if we have one or if we do, if it can be shaped. To answer that question pay close attention to the people you encounter and you will quickly discern the shape of their soul. Are they a happy person, a sad person, are they peaceful, loving and caring or are they filled with anger and bitterness? What you are looking at is the shape of their soul. It has been said that you are what you eat. If we consume a steady diet of junk food and junk culture we develop junk bodies and junk souls. If on the other hand we take care of what goes in our mouths and in our hearts, then we can begin to control the shape of our bodies and our souls. Lent is a soul-shaping period of the Liturgical year. Not just theoretically, but practically, if you take the time to participate. All the tools are there to shape and sculpt your soul by cutting away ungodly habits and destructive behaviors and renewing your mind by consuming God's ideas and thoughts, and speaking through your lips the prayers of the saints that have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thinking about doing it is not the same as doing it. It has the same effect on the body as only thinking about exercising. None! As we prepare to celebrate our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection, let us do so by taking up the challenge of Lent. We will then carve out a space in our heart fit for a king, and then 'the' King of King's will be seated on His throne, as well He should, and our soul will then be perfectly shaped and sculpted.

(Part 3) Holy Communion: the food of life

We have learned to equate food with life because food sustains our earthly existence. Our bodies are not self-sufficient. They do not possess life. We must constantly feed and maintain them with nourishment that comes from without. In the womb we are fed by our mother's blood. After birth, we are fed by her milk and later by the food and drink that the earth provides. We have come to equate food with life. Of all the creatures that inhabit the earth, we alone prepare food for eating, like the baking of bread and the making of wine. In fact, some form of bread and some type of wine constitute the sustaining elements of life in every human society. Consequently, bread and wine, the distinctive human food, have come to symbolize our mortal life.

We eat to live and speak of life in terms of food. But we also speak of life in terms of 'flesh and blood.' In fact, we cannot conceive of or know life except in terms of flesh and blood. A mother, for example, refers to her children – the fruit of her womb – as her flesh and blood. It is not hard therefore for us to recognize almost immediately the significant correlation between bread and wine and flesh and blood, the language that permeates the Eucharist. When we think of bread and wine or of flesh and blood we think of life. It is no accident, then, that bread and wine mixed with water are central to the Eucharistic mystery. Nor is it accidental that Jesus, when referring to His life, He spoke of it as flesh and blood and identified His life at the Last Supper with the distinctive human food, bread and wine.

At the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit comes upon the holy Gifts – the bread and wine of the Eucharist – to change them into the Body and Blood of Christ. God accepts the bread and wine of our offering. In return He gives us His own Son, who acts to make us His own Body. Jesus nourishes all who are in a state of readiness and watchfulness with His own glorified flesh and makes them partakers of divine life. Christ, the Bread of Life, changes and transforms us who feed on Him in faith and assimilates us unto Himself, as He promised, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him (John 6: 56).

That is why the Eucharist cannot be abandoned. A Christian cannot live without it. It conforms our manner of being and thinking. When Christ is in us, the law of love – the self-giving, unconditional, sacrificial agape of God – becomes the inner principle, source, and guide of our life.

Holy Communion:

The manifestation of selfless love

At the Divine Liturgy, Christ, the divine Bridegroom of the Church calls His people to sit together with Him at Table. At the Table of the Lord we are initiated time and again into the depths of the corporate life of the Church as communion in God and with God. The Eucharist unites us both to Christ and to one another, as the prayer of the Liturgy indicates. “And unite us all to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and the Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

Through the Eucharist, the divisive and destructive powers of Satan are being continuously defeated and the life of selfless love is revealed to God’s people so that they may learn it and be inspired to abide in it. Empowered and perfected by Christ’s grace and mercy, the community and each of its members are called to become an epiphany of divine love, an image of the new humanity gathered around the risen and glorified Lord and living under His rule. No longer alienated from our true nature, we enter as free persons into a communion – *koinonia* – of love where everything that divides people is abolished. We exist not as we are, but as that which we will become.

Let us depart in peace

On this side of death every ascent requires a descent. So it is with our experiences at every celebration of the Divine Liturgy. We climb the rungs of the ladder of the divine ascent to be embraced by the boundless love of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We sit at Table with Him to hear the words of life and to partake of the Bread of life. But then, we are sent back, to ‘depart on peace.’ We are required to return to the world and to immerse ourselves in the affairs and circumstances of every day life, bringing the redemptive power of God and the blessings of the Eucharist to our wounded and broken world. Having partaken of the Body of Christ, we must now tend to the needs of broken human bodies and spirits that are all around us so that the rays of God’s Kingdom may shine in the darkness of our fallen world bringing healing, hope, peace, justice, and joy to the hearts of people, until the Lord comes in glory.

Father Alkiviadis Calivas,

Professor Emeritus of Liturgics

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Father Alkiviadis Calivas is Professor Emeritus of Liturgics of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA. Ordained in 1956 upon his graduation from Holy Cross, Fr. Calivas served as pastor of two large New York City parishes. A Holy Cross School of Theology faculty member since 1978, Fr. Calivas has served the School in various capacities, including Director of Student Life, Chaplain, Dean of the School of Theology, Dean of the College, and Administrative Director and President. He has served on several Councils, Boards and Commissions of the Archdiocese and was elected President of the Presbyters Council of the Archdiocese when it was established in 1970.

Fr. Calivas received his Doctor of Theology from the University of Thessaloniki in 1982. His publications include *Come Before God in Prayer and Solemn Feast*, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* and a series of four volumes under the general title *Essays in Theology and Liturgy*.

Ask Father:

What are the fasting rules during Lent, and when can we receive Communion?

For adults in good health, we are to abstain from meat, dairy, oil, and wine Monday thru Friday. On the weekends the fast is relaxed and we are allowed oil and wine. That is the letter of the law. In practice it is very difficult to get by without oil (olive oil), but we do the best we can. If you are taking medications or have ill health then you work out a program with your spiritual father. If you are a child or adolescent then you modify the strictness again under the guidance of a spiritual father. The important thing is not to be self-directed, as the same axiom applies to those who want to be their own lawyers or their own spiritual fathers. During Great Lent communion is offered during the week in the form of Pre-sanctified gifts from the previous Sunday Liturgy. In our case the Pre-sanctified liturgy begins at 6:00 p.m. Preparation by fasting for those who want to receive Holy Communion should begin at 12 noon. If because of Doctor's orders you have to take medication and are not able to fast, then, you should still come to Communion because the purpose of fasting is not to destroy the temple of the Holy Spirit (the body) but to discipline it through spiritual exercise. Of course fasting should not become an end in itself but should be joined with prayer, reading of the Scriptures and Holy Fathers and Mothers of the Church and alms giving as well as fasting from evil thoughts. The combination of these disciplines will take you into a new spiritual realm that you would otherwise be unable to enter.

Ask Father

We would like to begin a new feature in the Monthly Bulletin. Many times we have questions about our faith and we think we are the only one. However, it is often the case that questions are universal and a good way to learn more about our faith. Address your questions to frantonios2@mindspring.com and he will try to address them in the following month's bulletin.

FOCUS ON FASTING

A Reflection on the Great Fast by Father Athanasios Demos

At my old age I have come to realize that I personally need to focus fast during Lent and all other fasting periods of the Ecclesiastical year. As in most cases I have focused on what I should or should not eat and how much I should or should not eat. Food has been the focus that has absorbed my attention. Now as I grow older I find myself leaning towards a different focus not so centered on the particular details on what and how much I eat, rather to focus on eating much less and of that which is healthier for my body? vitamin packed vegetables, less carbohydrates.

I have found over the years that many people become nervous, uptight and irritable during fasting periods because they are struggling to control their appetites and discipline their bodies. While the food fast is meant to reflect on the spiritual struggle against sin, which is to fast from sin - this latter focus seems to dissipate, as the food struggle becomes more and more of a central focus. Our friends may correct us if they see us eating something that is not "fasting food" yet laugh at an off-color joke or use of profanity. "You shouldn't eat that if you're really Orthodox?" What about "You shouldn't say, think or do that if you're really Orthodox"? We don't dare delve into the sin aspect of fasting, but we do dare to focus on food.

Perhaps our focus should intensify in concentrating on the real focus fast to focus on what I should or should not think, to focus on what I should or should not say, to focus on what I should or should not do. My focus fast should center on what that person in the mirror eats and how much he eats, on what he thinks and how he thinks, on what he says and why he says it, on what he does and why and how he does it.

I can't speak for you; I can only speak for myself. I think that this Lent I'm going to do my best to concentrate

intensely on fasting from my thoughts, words and deeds asking myself why I think, say and do things what reasoning or excuse do I have for thinking saying or doing things and whether my thoughts, words and deeds are hurtful or beneficial to others and to myself. Most of all I must reflect on my thoughts words and deeds and ask if they bring Glory to Almighty God. If they don't then even my strictest fast in every form may be hypocritical. If they do, then the Easter Resurrection Service will bring an even deeper sense of joy in knowing that in some small way fasting brought my unworthy soul closer to God. I pray that God will bless you so that - in all its forms and to whatever degree - your fast may bring you even closer to Almighty God! In fact, let's pray for one another that by being closer to one another, we will all become even closer to God. I pray that we experience a most blessed, inspiring and holy Lent!

Fr. Al Demos serves as Chancellor of the Metropolis of Boston.

Sunday Epistle & Gospel Readings

April

April 3

April 10

April 17

April 24

Epistle

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrew's 4:14-16;
5:1-6

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrew's 6:13-20

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrew's 9:11-14

St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians 4:4-9

Gospel

Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Mark 9:17-31

Mark 10: 32-45

John 12:1-18

Parish Happenings

Prayer List:

Please keep these St. Philothean family members in your prayers:

Christina	Theodora
Sherry	Panayiotis
Ben	Richard
Demetra	Lucian

On Behalf of the Dekazos Family:

We would like to thank everyone for their expression of love and care at the funeral of our beloved Kiki. Especially we would like to thank everyone who helped with the meal following the funeral. It was a great support and blessing to our family.

-Frieda Dekazos

Congratulations Angie and Andrew

They are the proud parents of a baby boy, Nicholas Andrew Shi! He was born March 5.

New Bulletin Editor:

Just a reminder to send any announcements for the bulletin to Kacina at Greekgirl1087@aol.com

Parish Council Meeting:

Next Parish Council Meeting: April 20 (the third Wednesday of the month), following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and Lenten meal (7:45 p.m. approximate starting time).

Covered Dish Luncheon:

We will not be having a Covered Dish Luncheon in April. Instead His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios will be here to celebrate Divine Liturgy, Memorial Service and dedication of an icon in memory of Fr. Homer Goumenis on Sunday, April 3 following the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Homer was instrumental in the founding of St. Philothea parish and served as one of our itinerant priests for many years. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to remember him in this special way. Please join us in honoring the memory of this extraordinary priest and friend. Lunch will be served following the dedication. Please RSVP to Kurt Knisely 770 725-2639.

Building Maintenance:

Last person to leave the building please check the bathrooms to make sure the toilets are not running, as well as turn the heat down to 62 and make sure the lights are off.

The Bookstore:

The Bookstore is open every Sunday after the Divine Liturgy and has a wonderful collection of resources to enrich our spiritual lives.

St. Philothea Directory:

Father Anthony Salzman, Presbyter
Phone: 770-725-5033
E-mail: frantonios2@mindspring.com

Parish Council:

President: Dean Kimbaris
Vice President: Kurt Knisely
Treasurer: Bill Mahoney
Secretary: Stacey Cramer
Members: Frieda Dekazos, Alex Johns, Karen Kimbaris, Angie Shih, Ann Volk

Sunday school:

Dana Johns

Music Director:

Mari Iakovou

Philoptochos Board:

President: Karen Kimbaris
Vice President: Mari Iakovou
Secretary: Nina Lamson
Treasurer: Tara Mahoney

Marketing and Maintenance Chair:

Rick Volk

Hospitality Chair:

Georgia Parthemos

Communications Chair:

Tammy Andros

Liaisons to the Caterer:

Dean and Karen Kimbaris



St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

April 2005						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
27 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	28 6:30p OCF D & D	29 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	30 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	31 7:00p Akathist Hymn	1 7:00p Akathist Hymn	2
3 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	4 6:30p OCF D & D	5 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	6 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	7 7:00p Akathist Hymn	8 7:00p Akathist Hymn	9
10 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	11 6:30p OCF D & D	12 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	13 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	14 7:00p Akathist Hymn	15 7:00p Akathist Hymn	16 Metropolitan Lenten GOYA Retreat
17 Metropolitan Lenten GOYA Retreat 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	18 7:00p Akathist Hymn	19 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	20 6:00p Presanctified Liturgy, Lenten Meal	21 7:00p Akathist Hymn	22 7:00p Akathist Hymn	23 9:00p Saturday of Lazarus, Divine Liturgy 9:00, with palm folding
24 9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 7:00p Holy Week Services	25 7:00p Holy Week Services	26 7:00p Holy Week Services	27 7:00p Holy Week Services	28 8:00a St. Basil the Great, Vespers Liturgy 7:00p Holy Week Services	29 Great Hours, 9 a.m., Taking Down of Christ from Cross, 3 p.m., Lamentations, 7 p.m., Vigil 9 p.m. till daybreak S	30 9:00a Holy Saturday, Vespers Liturgy 11:00p - May 1, 5: 1:00a Great and Holy Pascha



**St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta**

3761 Mars Hill Road
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677
For more information: 770/725-5035



Volume 12 — Issue 4
April 2005