

# Rector's Letter for June, 2010

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Many of us in the parish have been realizing that we have been experiencing a whirl of events since Christmas. Every week or two we have had another big occasion to prepare for: church feasts, funerals, special visits, grave blessings, dinners, a wedding — you name it! So much of it has been truly good, but it's easy at this point to get overwhelmed. God knows that we do get swept off balance by events, and so he provides seasons of prayer and fasting, to help us find our feet again. We are tempted to think of this month's Apostles' Fast as a burden (if we don't ignore it altogether!). What? We're supposed to avoid meat again? Didn't we just finish Great Lent?

But fasting seasons are a gift, reminding us to slow down, reflect on everything that we have been doing, and remember for whom and through whom we live. We are constantly tempted to put our trust in other powers and authorities, but fasting reminds us to depend on God alone. Perhaps the simplest and most profound prayer is the one our Lord taught us: "Give us this day our daily bread." Our heavenly Father knows exactly what we need, and he gives it to us, whether it's food for our bodies or for our souls.

We've been working really hard as a parish. We need fresh nourishment for our souls, and that is the daily bread our Father has provided in this Apostles' Fast: to seek time in silence and peace; to seek the presence of God in prayer, to seek our food from God. The table is spread for us. Bon appetit!

Yours in Christ,



## Around the Parish

On May 15–16, we joyfully welcomed **His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek** back to our parish. The whole occasion was beautiful, and thank you to everyone who worked so hard on hospitality.

**Theodora and Peter Boris were married** on May 23 in our parish. They will be living in Oregon for a while, but we hope to welcome them home in due time. May God grant them many years!

Eight days after the feast of Pentecost (May 31 this year), we begin the **Apostles' Fast**, a time to reflect on what has passed since Pascha, to seek the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and to prepare for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29.

**On Saturday and Sunday, June 12–13, we welcome our Bishop Nikon for his annual visitation.** He was to be with us for Meatfare Sunday, but had to postpone due to illness. Please join us for the services, and for the luncheon on Sunday.

**Our patronal Feast of Saints Peter and Paul** is a few weeks away, June 29. We will celebrate with Vespers and dinner on Monday, June 28, at 6 PM, and Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, June 29. Please mark your calendars and make every effort to attend this central day in the life of our parish.

We hope to host a **concert of the Yale Russian Chorus** in mid-October. If you are willing to serve as a coordinator of hospitality on the day, please speak with John Stoidis.

### **Diocese of New England Youth Rally 2010:**

Youth Rally 2010, the annual event for the young people of the Diocese of New England, will be held at the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston's camping and retreat center in Contoocook, New Hampshire from Monday, August 16, until Saturday, August 21. This is an event where the youth of the diocese can come together for a week of fun, worship, and fellowship. All diocesan

youth who have completed fifth grade and have not yet celebrated their eighteenth birthday are eligible to attend the Youth Rally. If you have children in your family who are interested in attending this year's Youth Rally, please contact Fr. John Hopko, Youth Rally Director, so that he can provide you with the necessary application forms. The deadline for registration is Monday, July 19, 2010. If you are an adult and would like to volunteer to be a member of Rally Staff, please also contact Fr. John Hopko.

CONTACT DETAILS: Fr. John Hopko, Diocesan Youth Rally 2010, c/o 34 Fairview Avenue, Terryville, CT 06786-6329; email: [saintcyril@snet.net](mailto:saintcyril@snet.net); telephone: 860-582-3631.

Please also pray for Youth Rally. The encouragement of the youth in their Orthodox life is a crucial responsibility. Pray for the youth and the staff, for a safe, enjoyable, and blessed Rally.

## The Cloud of Witnesses

or

“Who is that on the wall?”

### Saint Marina

*This month continues the series on the lives of the Saints who are represented in the iconography of our church. The Apostle Paul describes this glorious company as “so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1), who are cheering us on to complete the race set before us. But for many of us, the cloud is a little too foggy, and we are left wondering, “Who is that on the wall?” Each month, we hope to answer that question with a brief account of one or more of the icons we encounter when we enter the church.*

This month, we consider the Life of Saint Marina (also called Margaret), whose icon is found on the middle of the north wall (on

the right as we face the altar). She is depicted wearing a white robe with monastic schema and a black cloak, bearing a small cross. This turns out to be one of the most mysterious icons painted by Ivan Diky, because the Saint Marina most widely known in the Orthodox Church was not a monastic. There is a revered Desert Mother by that name, commemorated by the Coptic Church.

First, let us consider Mother Marina. Her widowed father, Eugene, wished to become a monk and so enrolled them both in a monastery in Lebanon — Marina disguised as a boy. She lived the monastic life for seventeen years as “Marinos” when misfortune struck. She stopped at an inn while traveling on business for the monastery. The innkeeper's daughter maliciously accused the monk of fathering the child she had conceived. When the monk refused to give a defense, the monastery expelled “Marinos.” When Marina was forced to accept custody of the child, the monastery took her in once more, but still she did not reveal that she was a woman. From then on, she was assigned the lowest chores and the severest disciplines. She never complained or argued at the injustice, and only at her death was she revealed as a woman of great holiness.

Now we turn to Holy Great Martyr Marina of Pisidia, commemorated on July 17. Saint Marina was born in Asia Minor, in the city of Antioch of Pisidia (now southern Turkey), into the family of a pagan priest. In infancy she lost her mother, and her father gave her into the care of a nursemaid, who raised Marina in the Orthodox Faith. Upon learning that his daughter had become a Christian, the father disowned her. During the time of the persecution against Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284–305), when she was fifteen years old, St. Marina was arrested and locked up in prison. The governor Olymbrios, charmed with the beautiful girl, tried to persuade her to renounce her faith and become his wife. When she refused, the vexed governor gave the holy martyr over to torture. Barely alive, the martyr prayed: “Lord, You have granted me to go through fire for Your Name, grant me

also to go through the water of holy Baptism.” Hearing the word “water,” the governor gave orders to drown the saint in a large cauldron. When they plunged her into the water, there suddenly shone a light, and a snow-white dove came down from Heaven, bearing in its beak a golden crown, and the martyr was healed of her wounds. Amazed at this miracle, the people glorified the True God, and many came to believe. This brought the governor into a rage, and he gave orders to kill anyone who might confess the Name of Christ, and the saint was at last beheaded. The sufferings of the Great Martyr Marina were described by an eyewitness of the event, named Theotimos. Her relics are in Athens, in a church dedicated to the holy Virgin Martyr.

## Hymns of Great Martyr Marina

### **Troparion - Tone 4**

Your lamb Marina calls out to you, O Jesus, in a loud voice:

“I love you, my Bridegroom, and in seeking you I endure suffering.

In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in you, and I died so that I might live with you.

Accept me as a pure sacrifice, for I have offered myself in love.”

Through her prayers save our souls, since you are merciful.

### **Kontakion - Tone 3**

Adorned with the beauty of virginity,  
you have been crowned with unfading crowns, O Marina.  
Having shed your blood in holy martyrdom,  
and radiant with the miracles of healing,  
you have received from the hand of your Creator the prize of  
victory.

## Father George Calciu-Dumitreasa “To serve Christ means suffering,”

*Mihaela Alecsandru of our parish has been transcribing portions of interviews of Fr. George Calciu-Dumitreasa, who persevered through terrible imprisonment under the Romanian Communist regime. Here are some of his thoughts on his suffering in prison. He has much to teach us about our own experience of suffering.*

...My life here in Romania was full of good and bad events. I do not accuse anybody, I do not blame anybody, because all these were sent to me by God for my spiritual growing. Someone asked me if the suffering from the jail helped me out somehow and I answered: Not only helped me, but I am the product of this suffering. If I do something, if you see something in me, you have to know that this is due to suffering. Without it I have nothing.

Among all the questions, for the human being suffering is most inexplicable. Why is suffering necessary? I experienced suffering and I do believe that it was necessary for me. But it is so hard to accept this! When I was in jail we were wondering to each other: why this suffering, why us? Amongst millions of Romanians why did they choose us to suffer? What is the meaning of it? And God did not reveal anything from His intentions. We were “yelling” to God every day to give us less suffering, and He seemed to add more and more suffering.

After I got out from jail, I carried with me this sign of pain which marked my whole life. After the second imprisonment I left for the West, I travelled throughout all European countries, America and I told them about what happened in Romania. My intention was this: I could not keep silence while in Romania there was terrible suffering, there was injustice, communism, the churches that were demolished as well as the destroying of the human personality. In my pilgrimage I arrived at a Catholic monastery and

I slept in the monastery's library. And there, among many books, I found a small book of Christian thoughts. I opened the book at random, and I found a thought of Paul Claudel, a French writer. And he said: "God did not come into the world to eradicate the sufferings.... God did not come into the world to explain it also, but God came into the world to fill up human suffering with His presence."

Have you heard? "To fill up the human being suffering with His presence." ... Then I understood exactly the meaning of this suffering: God is present in us! When I was in prison and I saw people dying whispering the prayers, people that were in terrible pain and were praying for those who tortured them, people that were in prison and their children and their parents were suffering and they prayed for all, I understood that, indeed, Christ is the one that suffers in us.

But not in everyone that suffers there is Christ, because if someone curses, Christ is not in him. But we must treat him as Christ is in him. I met these things which deeply penetrated my heart ... we must have mercy for everyone that suffers.

... Christ our Savior, having undergone our entire human vulnerability — hunger and cold and thirst — He was sensitive to human suffering, to our needs. He was sensitive when someone was ill and he cured him. Many times Christ appealed to faith, but sometimes when somebody was very ill, He did not ask about faith, but cured him by word. He felt pity when someone was in despair because his child died, like the widow from Nain. ... He felt sorry for those who were hungry and thirsty. In this sense, He said that offering a glass of water is like giving it to Him.

So much has Christ identified Himself with us, humankind, that when anyone suffers, He suffers with him! Anyone that is ill, Christ is ill, too! Anyone that cries, Christ cries with him! Do you want to see the innocent Christ suffering? Go at the infant hospitals, go at the orphanages. Christ suffers in them. This is

Christ's total identification with us, and with our sorrows.

Everything He did, it was to strengthen in us the faith in God. Sometimes, He used the miracles, for our human weakness is thirsty for miracles. We are looking for miracles, but the miracle does not substitute for faith. As the holy Apostle Paul said: "Faith is to believe the things that are not seen." This faith makes us see — if the means are spiritual — what our bodily eyes or our reason cannot see. ... He had mercy on the hungry and thirsty when the Apostles told Him to dismiss the crowd. Christ multiplied the bread; he blessed it and then gave them to eat. ... He is a God sensitive to our needs, even participating to our suffering. God does not watch to someone, as we watch a show, He involves Himself in our sorrows."

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## “Truth is food for the soul”

O hearer of the truth, do not grow proud and say that you have heard the truth once. Truth is food for the soul. You have eaten bread today, and yesterday and the day before, month by month and year by year. And you will go on eating it, to strengthen your body. Feed your soul as well. Feed it with truth; with the same truth yesterday and today and tomorrow and for the rest of your life, that your soul may become whole and filled with light.

O Lord Jesus, feed us every day and every hour with your truth — with yourself, O Jesus, O sweet food! To you be glory and praise forever. Amen.

— *From a homily of St. Barsanuphius the Great*