

Look Forward. Look Within.

Great Lent Is an Opportunity to Gain a More Mature Relationship with Jesus Christ

A Message from Fr. Michael

Take Advantage of the Time!

Great Lent (which begins Monday, March 3rd) is a period of time that the Church sets aside for us to pray, reflect, simplify our lives and progress in our relationship with Jesus

Christ.

Lent is a spiritual journey that offers to us an opportunity to experience the presence of Christ in our lives; to understand his ministry of compassion; and to appreciate both the glory of His sacrificial passion and his glorious resurrection from the dead.

Take advantage of this time! Be good to yourself by committing to the Lenten discipline that the Church prescribes: to read the scriptures, to abstain from certain foods that you desire, to pray more, to be generous in almsgiving, to forgive everyone who has wronged you, and to ask forgiveness of those you have wronged.

Participate in the Church's call to look forward to the good things to come and to look into the condition of our souls. Come to the Lenten services that will be offered at St. Sophia: the Monday evening compline services, the Wednesday evening Presanctified Liturgies and the Friday evening Salutations to the Theotokos. These services are so powerful! Yes, the services may be longer than you are used to, but they are not really that long. They will make you feel better, calm your soul, quiet your mind and feed your hungering soul.

There will be many readings from the Old and New Testaments in the weeks to come. Many of them will be prophecies about the Messiah. Many will teach us about the promises God made to his people and his fulfillment of those promises. All of them proclaim in readings, prayers and lyrics that God reaches out to us and wants to share his life with you and his Church.

Those who wrote these Scriptures tell us that we have an eternal hope that only Christ can fulfill. What do we hope for? Forgiveness of sins. A clear conscience. Cleansing of our souls and restoration of our bodies. We want to be saved from the sting of bodily and spiritual death.

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St. Sophia
Greek Orthodox Church

**FEBRUARY-
MARCH
2014
MONTHLY
BULLETIN**

Looking Ahead

Saturday of Souls Liturgy
Feb. 22, Mar. 1 & 8

Forgiveness Vespers
Sun. March 2nd

Great Lent Begins
Sunday March 3rd

Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 9th

Annunciation
Tues. March 25th

Palm Sunday
April 13th

Holy Week
April 13th- April 20th

Pascha/Orthodox Easter
Sunday April 20th



His Anger Turns to Comfort...

However, many are afraid that God cannot love them. Others are afraid that God is too angry at them because of their sinfulness and does not want to forgive. Believing this lie, many give up trying to have a spiritual

life. If you are one of these people, you will find comfort in these services. You will hear the true, complete Gospel preached by the Orthodox Church.

You will hear the truth expressed in passages like this one from Isaiah:

*You will say in that day:
"I will give thanks to You, O Lord,
For though You were angry with me,
Your anger turned away,
And You did comfort me.
Behold, God is my salvation
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the Lord God is my strength and my song,
and He has become my salvation."
(Isaiah 12:1-2)*

What does Isaiah say? "In that day" means that the Lord will take on flesh and dwell among men... and we live in that "day" right now. The prophet says that the Lord "was" angry because, yes we have sinned, but that in his compassion and love for us he turned that anger away.

In Great Lent the Church proclaims that God's "anger" has turned to "comfort." God has given us His Son to minister to us. He sent the Holy Spirit to comfort: to open our eyes to the reality of our failings, yes, but also to reveal to us the hope of our salvation and to help us fulfill that hope.

The Prophet Isaiah speaks for all of us in his response to God: "Behold, God is my salvation." Great Lent is the time for us to increase our trust in Him and to move from merely being afraid of God to realizing that he is a compassionate Father who wants us to live.

God is our only hope. We cannot heal our souls any more that a surgeon can operate on himself. We need divine help. God has promised us that He would send us a savior. He has fulfilled that promise in the person of Jesus Christ. We live in times in which God has not fulfilled his promises, but has much more that He wants to accomplish for us.

He is our only hope. By his death on the cross he has abolished death. As we progress through Great Lent, look within your soul, acknowledge your imperfection and your need for a savior. As we prayerfully approach Holy Week, know that God is your Father and offers to us a new life and salvation.

Kali Sarakosti! May you have a blessed Lent,

Fr. Michael



Journey Into Orthodox Christian Lent

The Orthodox Church's 'Rite of Forgiveness' is an exhilarating kick-start for a time that just gets harder.

BY: Frederica Mathewes-Green
www.beliefnet.com

I had to apologize to someone Sunday night. In fact, I had to apologize to about a hundred people--one at a time, face to face.

It was great.

For Orthodox Christians, Lent begins differently than it does for Protestants and Catholics. The observance of Ash Wednesday is dramatic and beautiful but is not in the Eastern tradition. For us, Lent comes in gradually over a period of weeks, like a cello line subtly weaving itself into our lives.

Ten Sundays before Easter (or, as we call it, Pascha), we heard the Gospel lesson of the Publican and the Pharisee; before we begin the season of self-denial, we recall that it is futile to boast of self-denial. The Publican's model of repentance is our aim.

To reinforce that lesson, during the following week there is no fasting. The Orthodox pattern is to abstain from meat, fish, and dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays year round, but this is one of the few weeks that is suspended and feasting is the rule.

The next Sunday we heard the story of the Prodigal Son, perhaps the most beloved parable. The icon of this scene shows the son in worn clothing, with his feet

in rags; he cradles his sorry head in one hand, while stretching the other tentatively toward Jesus. There is nothing tentative about Jesus' response--he is running toward the son, his arms open to embrace, and a scroll tumbles from his hand: "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Orthodox confess their sins in the presence of a priest year round, but everyone must make a confession in Lent before receiving the Eucharist on Pascha. The awkward pain and embarrassment of admitting our wrongs is the necessary condition for release and joy. Being thoroughly known, yet loved anyway, is life's greatest joy. But you must allow yourself to be thoroughly known.

By the third Sunday, we have reached a watershed. The Gospel readings concern the Last Judgment, and pull no punches. Here is the choice: humility, or the cataclysmic rewards of stubborn pride. This Sunday is also called "Meatfare Sunday"--you eat meat this day, because you won't be eating any for a long time.

During all of Lent, Orthodox strive to abstain from eating certain foods. Our refraining from these foods does not somehow benefit God or make him like us more. Fasting is a form of self-discipline, like lifting weights or jogging. It builds the muscle of self-control. If we can master the temptation to reach for a cheeseburger, we can resist other daily temptations as they come along.

Some people find this fast so taxing it would sour them spiritually, and they must do less. Others find it not stringent enough. No one is to judge anyone else's fast, or even notice it. But it helps that we all look to a common standard. Since we all fast from the same things at the same time, we can trade recipes and commiserate.

With the following Sunday, seven weeks before Pascha, Lent begins in earnest. This is called "Cheesefare Sunday," and from now until Pascha we will abstain from meat, fish, dairy products, wine and olive oil. At the evening Vespers service we trade the bright chant melodies for more sober ones, and say the prayer of Ephrem the Syrian, a fourth century hermit: "O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk."

If you were in our church on this Sunday evening you would see us fall to our knees and then place the palms of our hands on the floor, and touch our foreheads down between them. This is called "making a prostration." You may have seen Muslims praying this way toward Mecca. This traditional Middle Eastern worship expression was used by Christians for centuries before the founding of Islam.

At last we reach the Rite of Forgiveness. As vespers come to a close, parishioners form a large circle. Nearest the altar the two ends overlap, as a deacon turns to face the priest. The priest bows to the ground, then stands to say, "Forgive me, my brother, for any way I have offended you." After the deacon says "I forgive you," he bows to the ground, and asks for and receives the same forgiveness. Then the two embrace. Each of them moves to the next person in line.

Over the course of an hour or so, every single person will stand face-to-face with every other person. Each will bow to the ground and ask for forgiveness; each will bestow forgiveness on the other.

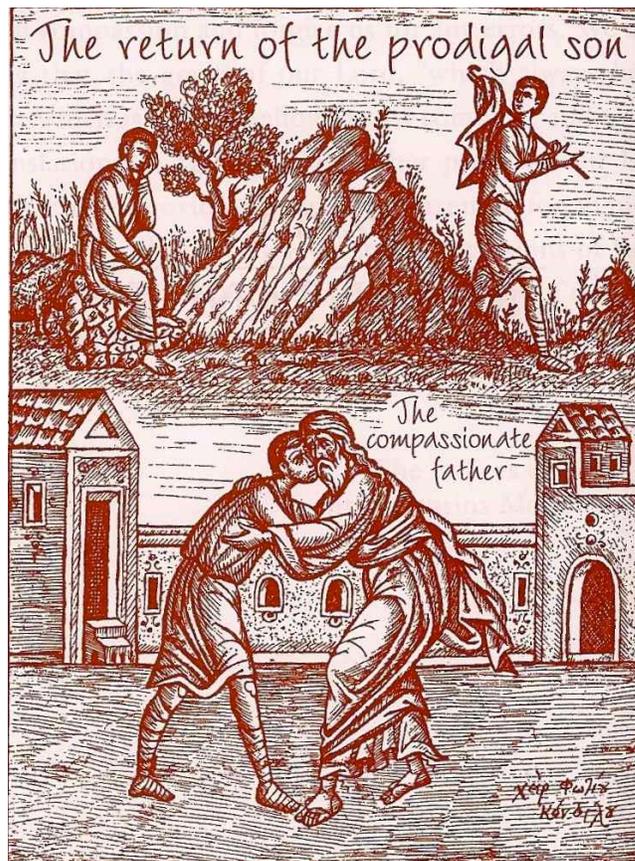
As my husband says, "When we do this, we do something the devil hates." Teenage brothers and sisters forgive each other. Small children solemnly tell their mothers, "I forgive you." Folks who have been arguing about the church budget for months embrace with tears.

In fact, tears are the common coin of the evening. Some weep hard as they look in each face and think how they have slighted, ignored, or resented this person during the year--a person now revealed as bearing the face of Christ. Some weep as they are forgiven, over and over, in an overwhelming rush of love and acceptance. Some weep and hug so much they hold up the line. A toddler ignores the line and goes from person to person, tugging on a skirt hem or trouser leg and looking up to ask, "Forgive?"

This is how Lent begins for us. It's an exhilarating kick-start for a time that will get much harder. The number of required services during Lent increase dramatically--during Holy Week there are 11--and they get longer as well. Food simultaneously gets shorter. Old knees don't like prostrations.

In all this, though, we rejoice; in the company of our friends we can run this race. It is good that it begins with forgiveness.

"Forgiveness Vespers"
will be celebrated at St. Sophia
on Sunday, March 8th at 12:15 pm.
Please join us!



SERVICES TO BE CELEBRATED AT ST. SOPHIA DURING GREAT LENT

Monday Evenings: Great Compline 6:00 pm; Confessions following service **Wednesday Evenings:** Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, 6:30 pm; lenten potluck to follow **Friday Evenings:** Salutations Service, 7:00 pm
Saturday Evenings: Great Vespers, 5:30 pm



FOR THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR...

LENTEN CHECKLIST

Dear Parishioner and Fellow Traveller on the Journey to Pascha:

Great Lent is the time to acquire the kind of faith that Jesus wants to find in us when He returns! In this vein, I challenge you during this upcoming Great Lent to:

_____ **Attend the Forgiveness Vespers** to be held on Sunday, March 2nd at 12:15 pm.

_____ **Attend at least one Great Compline** held on Monday evenings beginning at 6:00 pm

_____ **Pre-Sanctified Liturgy:** Come prepared to receive Communion at at least...

_____ *two* Pre-Sanctified Liturgies held Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm and at least
_____ *one* during Holy Week (Holy Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 9:30 am).

_____ **Attend at least two Salutations services** on Friday evenings beginning at 7:00 pm.

_____ **Participate in the Sacrament of Confession.** You can confess with any canonical Orthodox priest. I am available to hear confessions either on Monday evenings after the 6:00 pm compline service, Saturday afternoons at 4:30 pm, or by making an appointment for another time.

_____ **Participate in the Traditional Lenten fast** from foods to the best of your ability. The traditional fast is from meat, dairy and oil. Oil and wine are to be fasted from, except on Saturdays and Sunday. Common sense should be exercised when it comes to this fast, such as those who are under a doctor's care and must take certain foods with certain medicines. Those with questions, please ask me. If you have never fasted before during Great Lent, the best time to start is this year!

_____ **Increase alms giving.** Clean your closets and donate unneeded clothing to the Lighthouse Mission. Make a donation to the Bellingham Food Bank.

May Great Lent lead you to repentance, lead you to a humbling Holy Week, and prepare you for life-giving Pascha that will lead you to heaven.

*In Christ,
Fr. Michael*

**Coffee Hour Offerings
for February and March**

Thank you for finding a substitute and notifying Dena Lien if you are not able to provide for coffee hour on your scheduled day

Feb. 2 Cristina Faulkner & Ioana Aluash
Feb. 9 Evelyn Lallas, Toula Trames, & Harieklia Bryant
Feb. 16 Yanolla Boulos & Nahla Gholam
Feb. 23 **Apocreatiko/Meatfare Sunday Potluck**

Mar. 2 Salome Walters & Elizabeth Morgan (this is Cheese Fare Sunday)

During Great Lent-- For the following Sundays, please make sure that all foods follow the Church's Traditional Lenten Fasting Guidelines

Mar. 9 Eleni Kyriazis & Effie Bachelor
Mar. 16 tasia Tsoulouhas & Francine Tsoulouhas
Ma. 23 Ibtissam Mansour & Angelina Moussi
Mar. 30 Dorine Boulos & Marie Boulos

**Prosporo Bakers
for February and March**

Feb. 2 Brooksana Raney (4)
Feb 9 Kim Weil (4)
Feb. 16 Harieklia Bryant
Feb. 23 Tammy Mattson (6)

Mar. 9 Evelyn Lallas (5)
Mar. 16 Eleni Kipelides (5)
Mar. 23 Harieklia Bryant (6)
Mar. 30 Sue Moyer (5)

Epistle Readers

Feb. 2 Gebran Gholam
Feb. 9 Nicholas Mattson
Feb. 16 Jason Morgan
Feb. 23 Juju Gholam

Mar. 9 Alicia Morgan
Mar. 16 Gabe Martini
Mar. 23 Anastasia Boulos
Mar. 30 Bessam Boulos

***Thank you
to all of our generous volunteers!***

Apocreatiko/Meatfare Sunday Potluck Sun. Feb. 23rd. Please bring your favorite meat dish for the last day of enjoying meat before the start of Great Lent.

Forgiveness Vespers, Sun. March 2nd, 12:15 pm.

St Sophia's Mother's Group: Continuing to work our way through The One Thing Needful. Please ask Presvytera Elizabeth, Star Vagelaras, or Nadia Boulos if you would like to join our discussion group. We will be meeting at our homes. For more info, contact Presvytera Elizabeth (elizabeth.tervo@gmail.com)

Sunday of Orthodox Pan-Orthodox Vespers, St. Innocent Orthodox Church, (7431 Goodwin Rd, Everson) **Sunday, March 9th, 5:00 pm.** Parishioners from St. Sophia, St. Innocent (Everson), Abbotsford, Surrey, Arlington and Snohomish will come to celebrate the the victory of the Orthodox.

Looking Ahead

Forgiveness Vespers, Sun. March 2nd
Great Lent Begins, Sunday March 3rd
Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 9th
Annunciation, Tues. March 25th
Palm Sunday, April 13th
Holy Week, April 13th- April 20th
Pascha/Orthodox Easter, Sunday April 20th

Lost and Found: A lost ring was found at the coffee hour on Sunday, January 26th. If you think it might be yours, please contact Fr. Michael

Visits to Shut-ins Please let Fr. Michael know of any St. Sophia parishioners who are not able to come to church so that he can visit them and distribute the Sacraments.



Having completed our celebration of the Christmas and Theophany season, we turn our eyes toward Pascha. In preparation, we will practice music for Lent **Sunday, February 16, at noon.** I anticipate at least two more practices during the fast in preparation for Holy Week and Pascha-- please keep an eye on the weekly bulletin for when these will be scheduled. As always, anyone is welcome to join the choir at any time-- it is a wonderful way to sharpen one's focus as we learn the beautiful hymnody of the coming season!

The St. Sophia Bookstore

is a Christian educational outreach ministry to both parishioners and the general public. It is the only store in Bellingham that offers in one place books and other media on the Orthodox Christian Faith.

Great Lent begins on March 9 and we in your bookstore are here for your lenten needs!



Daily Lenten Meditations for Orthodox Christians", \$9.00

"A Journey Through Great Lent": meditations for daily use in our journey through the 40 days), \$13.00

"Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church" (here you will find answers to many questions about Holy Week as well as insights into meaningful participation) . \$15.00

"The Lenten Spring" \$17.00

"Great Lent" suggests the true meaning of Lent in our lives, \$16.00

"A Lenten Cookbook" (St. Nectarios/Seattle), \$12.00

"The Akathist Hymn" in Greek and English, \$26.00

"The Akathist Hymn" CD. \$3.00

"The Services for Holy Week and Easter" Greek and English \$25.00

THE 2014 ICON CALENDAR (parables and Miracles of Christ) icons by the hand of Dmitry Shkolnik, \$9.00

PASCHA CARDS(PACK OF 10). \$13.00

CD: EVANGELINE SINGERS....LENT, HOLY WEEK, EASTER . \$17.00

EASTER EGG DYE: RED ONLY \$4.00

RECOMMENDED READING:

(both by Kyriacos Markides) \$15.00 EACH

"THE MOUNTAIN OF SILENCE"

"INNER RIVER"

VISIT US FOR YOUR INCENSE HOLDERS AND INCENSE NEEDS; WE ALSO HAVE PASCHA CANDLES WHICH ARE BEAUTIFUL DECORATED FOR YOUR TABLE. ALSO OUR SELECTION OF ICONS IS FULL AT THIS TIME; AS THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF ICONS, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HAVE ALL OF THEM REPRESENTED; PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WISH TO ORDER WITH A LEAD TIME OF ONE WEEK. THANK YOU.

WE ALSO HAVE GREEK COFFEE AND BOXES OF LOUKOUM FOR THAT SPECIAL GIFT. COFFEE IS \$7.00 AND THE LOUKOUM ARE \$10.00 A BOX. WE HAVE SPECIAL GIFT WRAPPING AVAILABLE FOR THESE ITEMS.

VISIT THE BOOKSTORE FOR MANY OTHER ITEMS

The bookstore is open Sundays, during the coffee hour (11:30am- 1:00 pm) and by appointment. To make an appointment to visit the bookstore, call the church office at (360) 734-8745

If you would like to make a special order, call Hariiekla at (360) 483-8200 or email her at klia1@mac.com.

If you would like to read a book on the Orthodox Christian Faith, but do not know what to read, call Fr. Michael for a recommendation.

Join us at the Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan-Orthodox Vespers

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, (7431
Goodwin Rd, Everson)

Sunday, March 9th, 5:00 pm.
Parishioners from St. Sophia, St. Innocent (Everson), Abbotsford, Surrey, Arlington and Snohomish will come to celebrate the the victory of the Orthodox & restoration of the veneration of the holy icons.



Milestones

Chrismations- Michael, Christina and Peter Asfour; Sponsors: George and Ibtissam Mansour; 1/7/2014

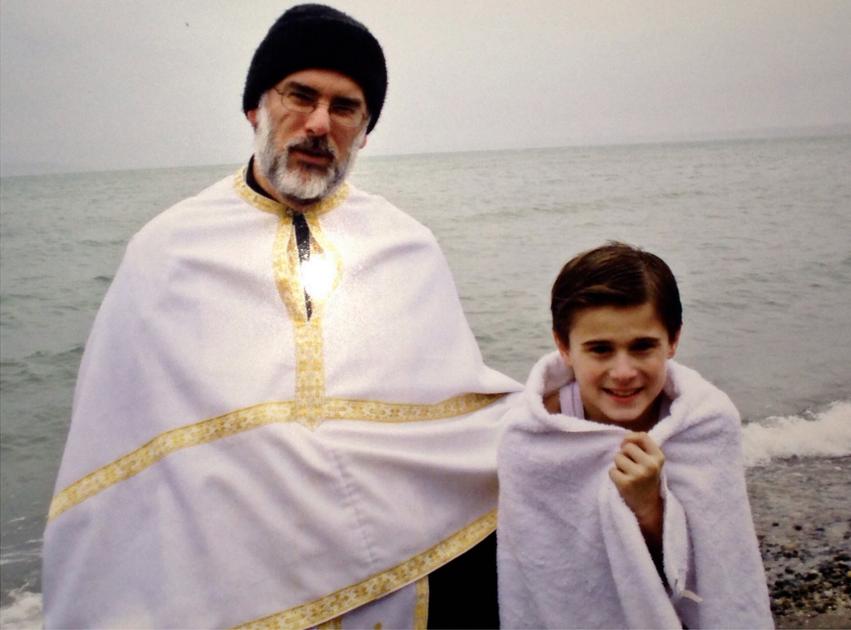
Baptism- Bennet Walsh, son of John and Roni Walsh; godparents Nicolaos Damianidis and Effie Manolakos; Benett took on the name Alexander. 1/11/2014

Chrismation- Roni Walsh; sponsor- Spring Damianidis Roni took on the name Ioanna; 1/11/2014



3rd Annual Blessing of the Bay

Congratulations to **Nikos Adamopoulos** (grandson of Nikos the chanter) who retrieved the cross at the blessing which took place on Sunday, January 12th at Marine Park in Bellingham. Fr. Michael awaits as Nikos and **Caleb Grow** race for the cross.



ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF ALL AGES TO MARCH IN BELLINGHAM ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Saturday, March 15th.

Orthodox Christians from St. Sophia and St. Innocent are going to March in the 2014 Bellingham St. Patrick's Day Parade to remind people that St. Patrick is also an Orthodox saint! Staging time 10:00 am. Parade starts at 11:00 am. For more information, please contact Presvytera Elizabeth.

What is the model for Stewardship?

Our Lord Multiplies the loaves and the fishes... the Apostles distribute them to the Faithful. Doing such, everyone is fed and satisfied!

Please help in the best way you can to help your parish fulfill its Orthodox Christian mission. Please pledge your time, talents and treasures and participate in spreading the Good News of Salvation.

It is requested that each parishioner fill out a new pledge card every year, prayerfully filling out the card and considering how one can help according one's own abilities.



**STEWARDSHIP.....
IS A WAY OF LIFE!**

Thank you...

***to those who have sent in their 2014 Pledge Card
indicating how they would like to commit their time, talent and treasure.***

Fr. Michael and Elizabeth Tervo + Dennis Ingraham + Peter Besas + Doug & Dena Lien + Manoli and Anna Chondroyannos + Fawzi & Samia Boulos + Christos Christophorou + Georgia Sentkowski + Areti Moularas + George & Judith Moularas + Yanni & Christina Gholam + Bessam & Yanolla Boulos + Gebran & Wafa Gholam + Massaad Boulos + Elizabeth Morgan + Victor & Dorine Boulos + Gabriella Boulos + Marcella Boulos + Nahla Gholam + Cynthia Chahine + Salim & Nadia Boulos + Valerie Boulos + Alex & Hortense Youssef + Curt & Salome Wolters + John & Francine Tsoulouhas + Harieklia Bryant + Bryant & Tamara Mattson + Andrew & Cheryl Webster + Thelma Stasinos + Helen Griffin + Joyce Piantes + Tim & Voula Parks + Demetrios and Terpsithea Totskos + Sorin & Ilana Eleonora Rotea + Mary Hulbush + Jim & Eleni Zourkos + Jim & Georgia Damianos + John Harriman + Kim Weil

(As of 1/27/2014)



Sun. Mar. 16th, 2013: **The 2nd Annual St. Sophia Oratorical Festival:** Students are encouraged to participate in the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. The purpose Oratorical Festival is to give our young people an opportunity learn, write, and speak about their Orthodox Faith, Church and Heritage. This process will enhance their understanding and appreciation of their identity as Orthodox Christians, and cultivate spiritual growth and maturity. The festival will be held on Sunday, Mar. 16th, after coffee hour. The Oratorical Festival Program is divided into three divisions:

Elementary Division for students in grades 4–6. The elementary speeches are not judged or timed, and participants do not advance to the District level. **Junior Division** for students in grades 7–9 **Senior Division** for student in grades 10–12.

The first and second place speakers for the junior and senior divisions will advance to the District Oratorical Festival to be held in Seattle. Finalists go onto the Metropolis and the Archdiocese Oratorical Festivals. For more information, please contact Presvytera Elizabeth at elizabeth.tervo@gmail.com



Come join the Project Mexico home building mission trip this June!

St. Innocent Orphanage/Project Mexico work trip

Those interested in helping build a home in Rosarito, Mexico and helping at an Orthodox Christian orphanage in June are invited to an informational meeting. Open to those over 16 years of age. Seniors citizens are also encouraged to attend. This is a perfect father/son or father/daughter trip! Meet and work with Orthodox Christians from around the country. For more information, contact **Brooksana Raney** at redheadbby@yahoo.com. For more information on Project Mexico, visit www.projectmexico.org



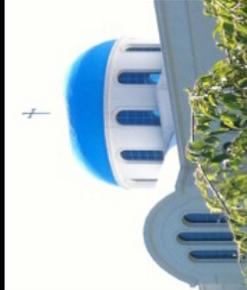
Three of the boys at St. Innocent Orphanage

Summer Camp July 6-12, 2014 (All Saints Summer Camp (High School and Elementary Sessions) July 13-19, 2014 (tentative): All Saints Summer Camp (Middle School Session). www.allsaintscamp.com

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

510 E. Sunset Dr. Bellingham, WA 98225

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