

“As many as have been Baptised into Christ have put on Christ: Alleluia!”

ORTHODOX FAMILIES' NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the newsletter for families of the
Louth and Grimsby parishes. Issue No. 3: September 2012



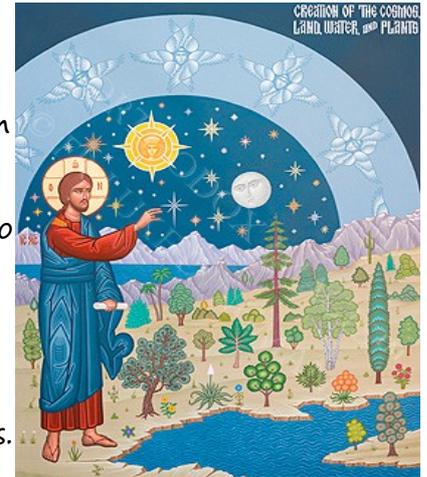
We've started this newsletter to help us keep in touch with all our families,

and give support when bringing up children in the warmth of the Orthodox Church family.

We welcome your ideas and questions, either in person or by email to orthodox@btinternet.com

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Orthodox Christian Church Year starts on September 1st. A new year, and a new start, giving us all a chance to take a fresh look at our lives, to pause and think about how we might want to strengthen our relationship with God and help our children to live their lives with God. The Church also marks this day with prayers for the environment, God's Creation. No matter how 'technical' our world becomes, we still depend completely on God's generosity for our food, and the beautiful world around us.



On this day we pray:

O Lord, Creator of all things, who by Your authority have established times and seasons, bless the beginning of our Church year with Your goodness; preserve Your people in peace, and through the intercessions of the Theotokos, save us. Amen.

This time of year also coincides with another new start – the beginning of the school year, and for many children, the start of a new life. We pray that all children will find joy in their school lives. Try to find time in the mornings to say a prayer with them, and send them off with God's blessings. They couldn't have a better start to the day than that.

Prayer of Metropolitan Philaret at the start of the day.

O Lord, grant that I may meet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon your holy will. In each hour of the day reveal your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and

feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me the strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will. Teach me to pray and You yourself pray in me. Amen

“The best inheritance you can leave your sons, the richest dowries you can prepare for your daughters, is a truly Christian upbringing.” – Bishop Irenaeus

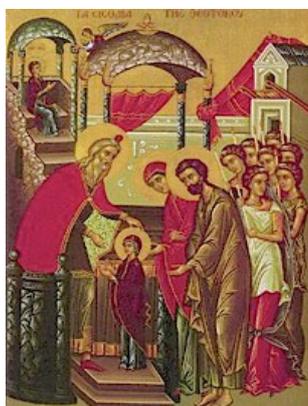
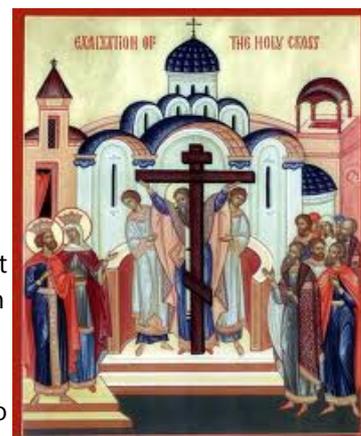
The Orthodox Church gives us a wonderful way to mark the passing of the year as we celebrate the Major Feasts. The icons of these Feasts often form one of the layers on the icon screen (iconostasis) and we are now blessed to have a full set of icons for Feasts and important days on the screen at Grimsby. When you come to the Liturgy, make sure to show the children the icons and tell them 'the story' of each icon. On the table by the door there is a card which explains them all, to help you out.

The three months covered by this Newsletter include some important Feasts. On September 8th we celebrate the Birth of the Mother of God (Most Holy Theotokos). On September 14th we remember the Elevation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross. And on November 21st, we celebrate the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Why are these Feasts important? And how do we celebrate them?



The Birth of the Most Holy Theotokos This day has been described as marking 'the beginning of the beginning'. If Mary had not been born to her parents Joachim and Anna, she could not have grown up to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, so her birth is truly where it all starts. Joachim and Anna were sincere Jews, regular worshippers at the Temple where Joachim was an important person. But they had no children and as time went on and they began to get too old to have children, they became more and more sad about it. They both prayed hard for a child, and then one day, while Joachim had gone off alone to pray, and Anna was alone at home, each of them dreamed that an angel came to tell them the wonderful news that they were to have a baby. They ran to embrace each other and the rest, as they say, is history. So we celebrate the birth of their very special baby daughter, whom they dedicated to God in thankfulness, on September 8th and we thank God that she grew up to accept her special role as the mother of Our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Elevation (or Exaltation) of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross On this day we celebrate St Helen's finding of the Cross on which Christ died. She went to Jerusalem especially to find it, and the tradition is that sweetly scented basil was growing where it lay. So at the services to mark this Feast, there is a procession and people hold bunches of basil in their hands. Once the wooden cross had been found, it became the most precious relic, and if people could, they would have small pieces to carry round with them to help them in times of trouble. From this we get the expression 'touching wood' as a protection from danger. Nowadays many people think this is just superstition, but you can see that it is really a way of remembering that Christ died on the Cross to save us from everlasting death. Perhaps the family could make a wooden cross to have at home? Or you can buy plain wooden crosses from craft shops or at <http://www.craftshapes.co.uk/index.htm> which the children could decorate or paint so that they would have a Cross for 'touching wood'.



Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple On this day we celebrate the next part of the story of Joachim and Anna's most special child, Mary. They had dedicated her to God, and on her third birthday she was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem where she would remain until she was old enough to be betrothed to Joseph. At the Temple, along with many friends and relations, the child was given into the care of Zacharias the High Priest, and he took her up the steps to the High Place and even into the Holy of Holies. This was so unusual that everyone could see that she was no ordinary child: she was destined to be the bearer of Jesus Christ, our Lord God and Saviour, who came to show us the way back to Paradise by 'trampling down death by death'.