07/09/2021

The Blessings and Hands of Slava 2021, Fair Oaks, California



On Sunday, August 15th, the Gospel lesson was the feeding of the 5000 men (not including women and children). Matt. 15:32-39. The Lord told the Apostles to “feed the people” He told them to use their hands and gather what food was available. Then, Jesus blessed the food and everyone ate till they were satisfied.

Blessed, hands, satisfied so started the beginning and end of Slava 2021.

Five days later on Friday, August 20th, early in the day, Daniel Pajunovic and Vera Malkovich painted the picnic tables on the patio – thus, began the work of preparation for our Slava. We were going to follow the words of Our Lord and do what was needed.

The next day, Saturday, August 21st, before 8 a.m., many of us began arriving at our Church grounds. We were going to use what we have, our hands , to beautify our grounds and clean our beloved Church. All was being don’t to honor the Mother of God, our Protectress, The Holy Virgin Mary. Fr. Dane and Protinica Milica were

first to begin. They opened the doors to the Hall and the Church. As the morning progressed many more hands arrived. By 8 a.m., people were cleaning the grounds; by 9 a.m., there were people in the Church. By 9:30 a.m there were people cleaning the patio. By 10 a.m., Rade Radulovich, Ioann Senuca and Mason Comtois were power washing the walkways

Heeding the call of Christ to use our hands, we saw equipment and supplies being brought. Kumovi for this year, Rade and Adriana Radulovich were early to arrive with their young daughters Sophia and Olivia. They were leading us by example – dedication to Christ and His Mother.

Rob Gojkovich, Boban Krstich, Mike Jovovic, Daniel Cajunovic and Charlie Valashan worked beautifying and cleaning the grounds and walkways. Fr. Dane and Protinica Milica were everywhere! Protinica took the wax out of the carpet in the Church. She beautified the patio with flowers, banner and icons. Fr. organized the tables for the Banquet, helped carry equipment and kept answering questions!!! The hands were many who scrubbed, polished, and cleaned our church: Protinica Milica, Adriana, Sophia, Olivia, Ruzitca, Ina, Nicoleta, Ekaterina, Elena, Svetlana, Debbie, Anna, Bosiljka, Vera and Natasha with her 3 small children.

On Friday evening, August 27, we were ready to celebrate the Eve of our Feast Day. Early in the afternoon, Miroslav Milovanovich arrived with loads of food to prepare. He was joined by Barron and Cheri Black and their daughters, Grace and Olivia, Zorana Petrovic and Svetlana Maksimovic. Cleaning fruits and vegetables, chopping vegetables, slicing bread – all had to be done by willing hands.

By 5 p.m., cars were already arriving for the Vesper service and the blessing of the Five Loaves. A wonderful feeling of quiet expectation was in the Church. Vladika Maxim entered our midst at 6 p.m. and with his blessings and gentle smile for all and we began our evening prayer service. It is often during these peaceful and solemn services that a person can sense that the presence of Saints and Angels from beyond are amongst us. Such was the feeling during this spiritually uplifting Vesper service. Vladika blessed Fr. Dane who then began the service. He was assisted at by Deacon Dragan (Danny) Stojanovich from St. Sava in Jackson. Fr. William at the Readers Stand and was joined by Fr. Timothy Robinson from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Sacramento and John Black. At the conclusion of the Breaking of the Five Loaves of bread, each person approached to be anointed with Holy Oil and received a gift of BLEST bread. Vladika Maxim had blessed all of us with his hands and with his presence. We left the Church knowing we had been surrounded by holiness.

Vladika Maxim answered questions at the dinner and spoke of the importance of the Virgin Mary in the life of all Orthodox believers around the world.

Saturday, August 28, 2021 –

Feast of The Assumption of The blessed Virgin Mary

Shortly after 7 a.m., the Kitchen and Patio were already beginning to fill with willing hands to assist with table setting, flowers and food! Kumovi Rade and Adriana Radulovich and their daughters arrived with Kolach and Zhito. Protinica Mary Anne arrived with flowers. Zorana Petrovich and Svetlana Maksimovic arrived to assist where needed. The flurry of last-minute items was being quickly completed.

By 9 a.m. the parking lot was full! As we entered the Church, we were greeted by Tutors: Aaron Gusak and Zorka Petrovich. The interior of the Church had wonderful flower arrangements in white with pale blue ribbons and bows everywhere. All had been designed and made by the hands of Luba Karnaookh People were quietly waiting for Bishop Maxim's arrival. Whether praying alone or greeting each other, we were all happy to be here. Some people were going to Confession. The outside porch area was full of both children and adults. Everyone was holding or wearing flowers! All had been designed and lovingly prepared by the hands of Luba Karnaookh. Sophia and Olivia Radulovich were wearing flower crowns on their heads. Luba presented corsages to Kumovi, Rade and Adriana, President of Sisters Circle Zorana Petrovic and President of our Church Milos Radmanovich.

When Fr. Dane appeared to announce Bishop Maxim was soon arriving, Luba announced that this was Fr. Dane's 19th anniversary with us and Fr. William's 13th anniversary Ordination to the Priesthood. It was also mentioned that Bishop Maxim had been Enthroned as our Bishop 15 years ago It is no wonder that we were feeling joy – God had favored us with 3 men to guide us in our earthly struggles.

The Procession with Priests, Deacon and altar servers with Bishop Maxim from the parsonage residence to the door of our Church finally arrived. Right at 9:30 a.m. with our bells announcing his arrival, Vladika halted at the entrance doors to our Church. He blessed young Grace (granddaughter of Elena Gruia) and accepted her flower bouquet. What a wonderful memory for a child to share with her Grandmother!

The Divine Liturgy began immediately. Vladika was respectfully surrounded by our own beloved Fr. Dane and Fr. William; guest V. Rev. James Retelas from The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Sacramento; and Deacon Dragan

Stojanovich from St. Sava in Jackson. Altar servers were: Reader Ethan Livingston, Dominik Senuca and Artem Rudko. Our Choir, under the Direction of Gorjana Zekich, was magnificent! Through Gorjana's outreach, she is quietly searching for and adding new Choir members. Encouraging people to become involved, she is slowly increasing the size of our Choir. It is wonderful hearing new voices being raised in prayer.

The Divine Liturgy moved quickly and reverently. In Vladika's Sermon, he encouraged us to remember the Mother of God who intercedes for us – all of us. As we listened, it was noted how many people allowed their eyes to look up at the Virgin Mary's icon above the Altar. That is where she watches over us with arms outstretched and hands raised in prayer. The Protection of the Virgin Mary icon is depicted larger than life. Vladika noted that she too had said 'yes' to becoming the Mother of God and had helped in Jesus' work on earth. Now, she intercedes on our behalf in Heaven. We just need to remember her and be grateful for her intercessions.

When all of us recited "The Creed" and later "Our Father", the power of prayer was felt. It is a true saying, 'one had to be there' to experience the event in its entirety. The Divine Liturgy was a moving experience.

We ended the Divine Liturgy with a Procession around the Church. Holding their banners high and leading us were John Kordic and Aaron Rey. The Blessing of Kolach and Zhito took place outside the entrance doors of our Church. Anaphora (Bread) was offered to all the faithful. Divine Liturgy for our Feast Day 2021 had ended. A truly lovely and satisfying experience.

Our Banquet was a great success. The patio was festively decorated and everyone was in a party mood. Miroslav Milovanovich outdid his usual excellent dining experience. His outstanding kitchen crew composed of Svetlana Maksimovic and Zorana Petrovic worked diligently to assist with the swiftness of delivering food to all of us. Under the direction of Martha Mihaljcic, our young servers (who had all eagerly volunteered) handed plated food to all of us quickly! Sophia, Olivia, Keltie, Kohlie, Grace, Olivia, Jelena, Jovana, Anna and Maria. Their assistance and willingness to assist is a wonderful testament to their parents.

The highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of awards to two outstanding members of our community. Fr. William was asked to read the proclamations of the awards presented by Vladika Maxim. Michael Jovovich was awarded a Gramata. Highlights were: his quiet, consistent and outstanding service to our Church. He serves on the Church board and most importantly he has been involved with our

Sunday School program for our youth. His wife, Trina, and son, Niko, were in attendance to witness and share in this momentous occasion of recognition for his service to us all. As is his nature, he spoke few words expressing a sincere thank you for recognition.

Vera Malkovich was awarded the Silver Medallion of St. Sebastian. She has served our Church in various capacities and started at age 13 with her Mother. She has been a Circle of Serbian Sisters President for many years. Her endeavors to assist in Church and hall cleaning with little or no financial cost to our community has been much appreciated. Vera stated in her thank you that those of her friends who are not members of our Church all know that her Church is the most important part of her life.

We congratulate both Michael and Vera for their love and dedication to our Church.

Fr. Dane concluded our program with a few words in closing. He Thanked all who had assisted in any way to prepare for our Slava. He Thanked our beloved Bishop Maxim for gracing us. He Thanked our Director and Choir. He Thanked our Kumovi. We closed with a prayer.

An ‘event’ which quietly took place all during the Banquet and went unnoticed by many was a gift from Vladika to our children. Vladika asked that the children be individually invited to approach him at his table. As they came forward, he blessed each child. Then he presented each one with a small wood carved crucifix of Our Lord. This memory – a personal Blessing by their Bishop and a cross presented to them during a Slava celebration, will never be forgotten. As adults, that simple act of kindness will always be

Cleanup of the patio and kitchen was done by many who followed the example of our Kumovi Rade and Adriana Radulovich. However, the true scrubbing, washing and storing that took place in the kitchen and behind the scenes was done by Svetlana Maksimovic and Zorana Petrovic and Daniel Pajunovic. They worked tirelessly until the last item was completed. A truly loving statement of selfless devotion and a gift to all who were unable to stay. We humbly thank them.

As the sun set on Slava 2021, the words of the Gospel from two weeks before proved that God is with us. We each did what we could with our hands. All who had prepared for and attended the Slava had many Blessings of the day.

We thank Vladika Maxim for his presence in our midst His hands blessed each of us.

Those of us who had gone to Confession for ‘inside’ cleaning, glowed outwardly

while we were at peace inside.

Those who had polished, scrubbed and cleaned anywhere on our property witnessed the splendor of God’s home here on earth.

Those who had power washed, removed trees and roots, cleaned the patio and placed tables looked around and sighed with pleasure.

Those who had helped with food preparation, serving and clean up were thankful the day had ended and their hands could rest.

And God saw that it was good.

And the Virgin Mary smiled.

Protinica Mary Anne

Thanks to all who are named and unnamed in the above. God knows who you are.









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