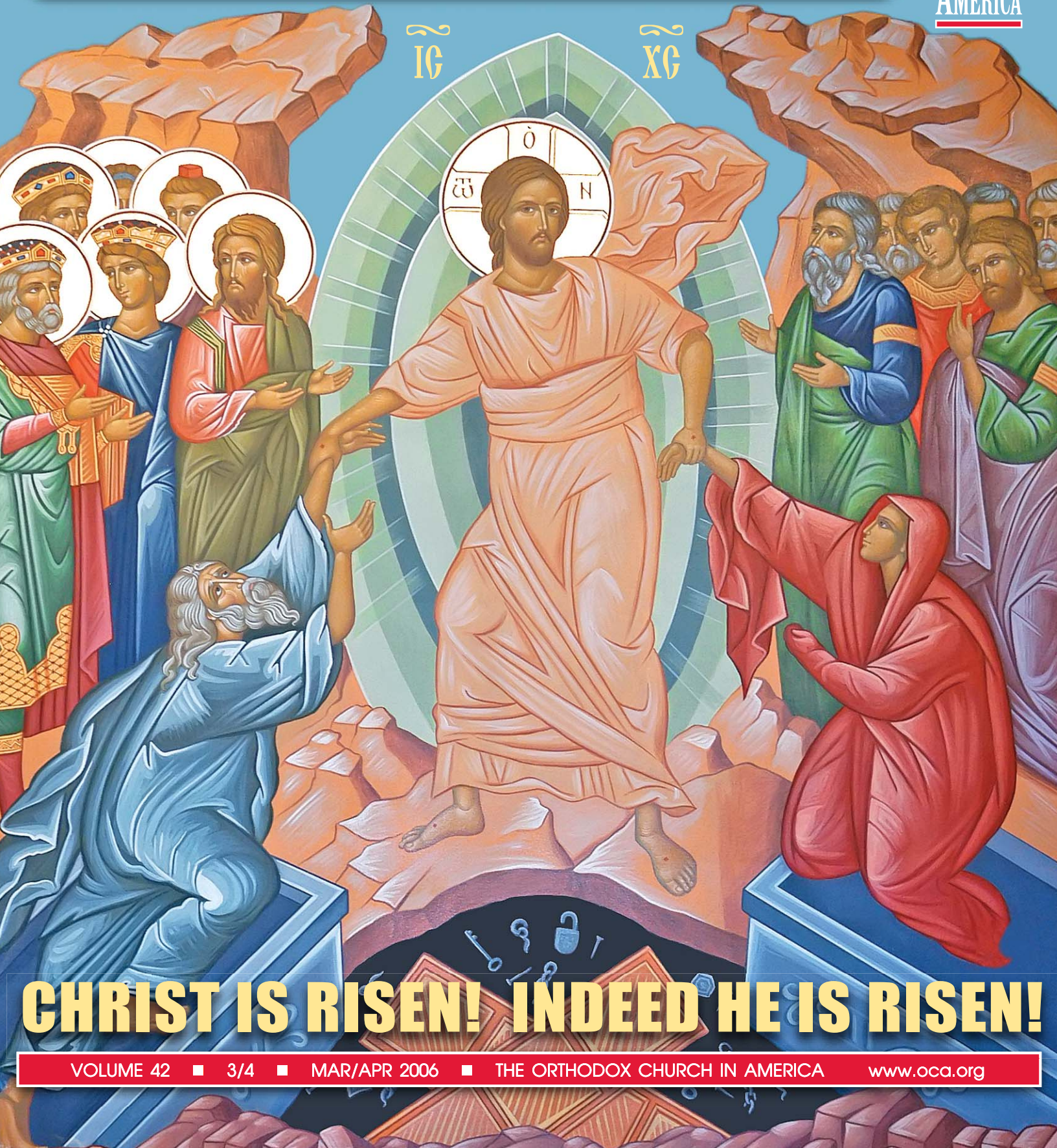


The Orthodox Church



CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Official

Nos. 462/463 ■ JAN/FEB 2006

■ RECEPTIONS

[MICKA], Archimandrite Theodor is canonically received into the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western PA and the Bulgarian Diocese from the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of New Gracanica. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Kyrill and attached to the Bulgarian Diocese/ January 4, 2006.

[SCOTT], Archdeacon Stephen is canonically received into the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western PA and the Bulgarian Diocese from the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of New Gracanica. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Kyrill and attached to the Bulgarian Diocese/ January 4, 2006.

■ ORDINATIONS

[ANDERSON], Hierodeacon John was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South at St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas, TX. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri and attached to the Diocese of the South/ January 15, 2006.

ERICKSON, John H. was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan Herman at Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ January 30, 2006.

FOLEY, Deacon Christopher was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop Kyrill of Western PA on behalf of Metropolitan Herman at Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ January 22, 2006.

GOODWIN, Deacon James Craig was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery, Rives Junction, MI. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Romanian Episcopate/ December 26, 2005.

KOCHER, Vassily was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South at St. Mary Magdalene Mission, Savannah/Rincon, GA. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri and attached to the Diocese of the South/ January 29, 2006.

MILETKOV, Nikolay was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western PA on behalf of Metropolitan Herman at Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ January 22, 2006.

NAGI, Deacon Dennis was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Nikon of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese at Assump-

tion of the Virgin Mary Church, Worcester, MA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Nikon and attached to the Albanian Archdiocese/ February 4, 2006.

■ ASSIGNMENTS

[ANDERSON], Priestmonk John is attached to St. Michael Skete, Canones, NM/ January 15, 2006.

DALY JR, The Rev. John G., who was Priest-in-Charge, is appointed Rector of St. Nicholas Church, Southbridge, MA/ February 12, 2006.

ERICKSON, Deacon John H. is assigned to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY/ January 30, 2006.

FOLEY, The Rev. Christopher is attached to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY/ January 22, 2006.

GOODWIN, The Rev. James Craig is appointed Assistant Priest at Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery, Rives Junction, MI/ December 26, 2005.

HEWLETT, The Rev. Justin is released from duties as Associate Priest at St. Herman of Alaska Church, Surrey [Langley], BC, Canada but will remain attached there/ February 10, 2006.

JANOWSKI, The V. Rev. Alexander, who is retired and suspended, has had his suspension lifted. He remains attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada/ January 8, 2006.

KOCHER, Deacon Vassily is assigned to St. Mary Magdalene Mission, Savannah/Rincon, GA/ January 29, 2006.

KOLES, The V. Rev. David, who was on a Leave of Absence, is returned to active duty, released from duties at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Terryville, CT, and assigned Acting Rector of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT/ March 1, 2006.

KULIK, The Rev. Mirosław is released from duties at St. John the Baptist Church, Edwardsville, PA, from the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern PA, and from the Diocese of Eastern PA/ December 15, 2005. He is transferred to the omophorion of Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western PA and attached to the Diocese of Western PA, where he is appointed Acting Rector of St. Mary Nativity Church, Masontown, PA/ January 1, 2006.

LUKASHONOK, The Rev. Alexander, who was on a Leave of Absence, is returned to active duty. He is released from duties at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC, and from the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman and the Diocese of Washington and New York and transferred to the omophorion of Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest. He awaits assignment/ March 1, 2006.

[MICKA], Archimandrite Theodor is assigned

to Holy Cross Monastery, Castro Valley, CA/ January 4, 2006.

MILETKOV, Deacon Nikolay is attached to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY/ January 22, 2006.

NAGI, The Rev. Dennis is assigned Acting Rector of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church, Worcester, MA/ February 4, 2006.

OLSEN, The Rev. Peter is released from duties at Christ the Saviour Church, Milton [Ballston Spa], NY, and appointed Acting Rector of St. Basil Church, Watervliet, NY/ March 1, 2006.

POORE, The V. Rev. Leonhard L. is released from duties at St. Tikhon's Seminary, South Canaan, PA; St. Basil Church, Simpson, PA; and the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman. He is transferred to the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South and attached to the Diocese of the South/ January 16, 2006. He is appointed Rector of St. Anthony the Great Church, San Antonio, TX/ January 29, 2006.

RIGDEN-BRISCALL, The Rev. Christopher is released from duties at St. Herman of Alaska Church, Surrey, [Langley], BC, Canada, and attached to Holy Resurrection Sobor, Vancouver, BC, Canada/ February 10, 2006.

[SCOTT], Archdeacon Stephen is assigned to Holy Cross Monastery, Castro Valley, CA/ January 4, 2006.

SPENGLER, The Rev. Anthony is released from duties at St. Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL, and attached to St. Panteleimon Church, Summit, IL/ December 22, 2005.

TATE, The V. Rev. Matthew is appointed Administrator of the Orthodox Mission, Kona, HI. All his other duties remain the same/ December 22, 2005.

■ LEAVES OF ABSENCE

CAMERLYNCK, Deacon Philip is granted a Leave of Absence for six months. He remains attached to Holy Trinity Church, Overland Park, KS/ December 22, 2005.

■ DEATHS

[SCRATCH], Igumen John, who was attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada, died in retirement on January 15, 2006. *May his memory be eternal!*

■ PARISHES

BULGARIAN DIOCESE/ New Monastery: Holy Cross Monastery, 34580 Palomares Rd., Castro Valley, CA 94552; 510/581-2778. Archimandrite Theodore [Micka], Archdeacon Stephen [Scott]/ January 4, 2006.

DIOCESE OF THE WEST/ New Name: The Orthodox Mission, Redding, CA, is now known as St. Nicholas of Japan Mission/ February 3, 2006. ■

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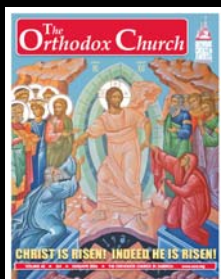
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Our Cover

"This is the day of resurrection! Let us be illumined by the Feast! Let us embrace each other! Let us call 'brothers' even to those that hate us, and forgive all by the resurrection!"

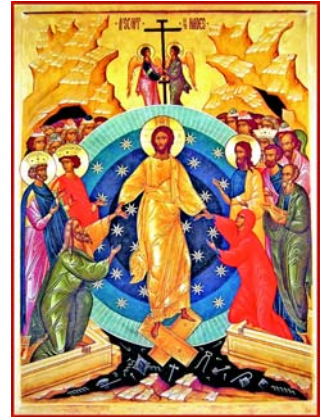


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Treasure in earthen vessels

During the last months, the Orthodox Church in America has experienced a storm of high intensity. Allegations of misappropriation of money went by stages from a long letter by a former treasurer of the Church to the Holy Synod of Bishops, to a website dedicated to exposing the allegations to a wide public in North America and around the world, to newspaper stories across the country. Responses by the Metropolitan Council, Holy Synod, and Lesser Synod were made public, but the intensity of the storm did not decrease. The Primate of our Church dismissed the long-time Chancellor, and announced a program of audits in conjunction with both a law firm and outside auditors. The web site continues its program of activities. Most recently, our Primate addressed a pastoral letter to the parishes and the whole Church.

Many people in the Church have been severely wounded during the months of crisis – bishops, priests, officials and staff of the church administration, laity in the parishes. These wounds are wounds to the Church, because they affect our cohesion and our credibility. In the midst of the pain, it is difficult – sometimes impossible – to find the way forward in pursuing the mission of the Church.

We are confronted by a truth which is actually an eternal, permanent truth about the Church, and not a truth limited to times of crisis, public scandal, and internal conflict. The treasure of our faith is held “in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us” [2 Corinthians 4: 7].

The human dimension of the Church is always fragile and vulnerable. This is so for every person who is a member of the Church, and it is so for the Church corporately.

Yet the full truth is that the glory of Christ is contained in the earthen vessels of our humanity. The fragility and vulnerability of our human nature hold within them the presence of Christ and the power of God.

At a time of crisis – as always – we are called to integrity. Our challenge is to respond faithfully, and not merely to react defensively. The journey towards rebuilding trust will require doing justice to financial integrity.

The story of the last months includes allegations, rumors, and conjectures. In the media and in views expressed by members of the Church allegations have at times been treated as facts, and those about whom questions have been raised have been judged as guilty. This is a violation of important principles of Christian behavior as well as civil behavior. The journey towards rebuilding trust will require acting justly towards the persons about whom allegations have been made.

Finally, the journey towards rebuilding trust is not only for the leaders of the Church and for the Church’s administration. In every dimension of life in the Church all of us – bishops, priests, and laity – are challenged to be responsible participants in the journey ahead. And responsibility calls for integrity, for compassion for one another, and for tender care for the mission of the

Church.

The words of the Apostle Paul quoted above are placed in the Letter to the Corinthians in a larger context: “...What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord....It is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us” [2 Corinthians 4: 5-7].

During His preaching ministry, when Christ saw the crowds gathered around Him, He had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. We have Jesus Christ as our Chief Shepherd. As Chief Shepherd and Risen Lord, He leads us forward, toward God’s future. We follow Him in full awareness that we are fragile and vulnerable, and yet in full awareness that what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as the Risen Lord.

Christ is Risen! ■

Where should we go from here?

Log on to www.oca.org, take our on-line survey, and let us know how we can improve the OCA web site!

An on-line survey designed to gather reactions to the web site of the Orthodox Church in America is now available at www.oca.org.

Developed by Mr. John Mindala and Mr. David Lucs, members of the OCA Communications Office, and the Rev. Jonathan Ivanoff, the goal of the survey is to solicit reactions to the present web site, to help identify the type of individuals who visit the site, and to provide a forum for suggestions and recommendations for ongoing upgrades, expanded resources, and other enhancements.

Survey results will assist the OCA Communications Office in improving the web site in light of user interests and concerns.

The survey also solicits reactions to the OCA’s news magazine, *The Orthodox Church*.

According to Mr. Mindala, OCA web master, over 700 individuals have responded to the survey through the first week of April. ■

That's the Spirit

FATHER VLADIMIR BERZONSKY

They filed a sponge with sour wine and put it on a hyssop, and then put it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished," and He gave up the ghost. — John 19:29

Survival and Triumph

In all the obituaries in the newspapers, one comes to the listing of "survivors," the members of the deceased's immediate family. The term always fascinated me. Probably the term comes from the sense that the entire family suffers when one is in critical condition. They all agonize with him or her, enduring the length of illness until the end. In that sense they "survive" and regain ample strength to go on living bereft of their loved one.

But survival is a negative term when it comes to Our Lord Jesus Christ's traumatic cosmic event on the Cross. In saying, "It is finished," and then expiring, we cannot understand just that He died, while His mother Mary, John, and the extended family of disciples survived. The Greek term *tetelesthai* refers to a completion or a consummation. It describes the indescribable, explains the inexplicable, and challenges us with the mystery that Saint Paul called "Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but to them they are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" [1 Corinthians 1:23].

The Cross is the summation of Christ's entire ministry, the fulfillment of the plan of the Holy Trinity, proof of the possibility to conquer the curse of Adam by total obedience to the will of the heavenly Father, and the portal to the Kingdom of heaven now opened to all humanity. Rather than being the end of a failed campaign, it is the start of a wholly new relationship between God and mankind.

The Cross far transcends the limitations of mere survival. We heard in the recent past the pop song, "I Will Survive," that affirms a woman's heroic and heartfelt shout to

Spirit to 30

WISDOM from the Fathers

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

He underwent all these sufferings for us, so that we might be saved, and He truly suffered, just as He truly raised Himself.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

We have declared repeatedly and unceasingly that it was the only-begotten Son of God Who was crucified, and that He was condemned to death. He that is eternal by reason of the nature which is His by His birth from the

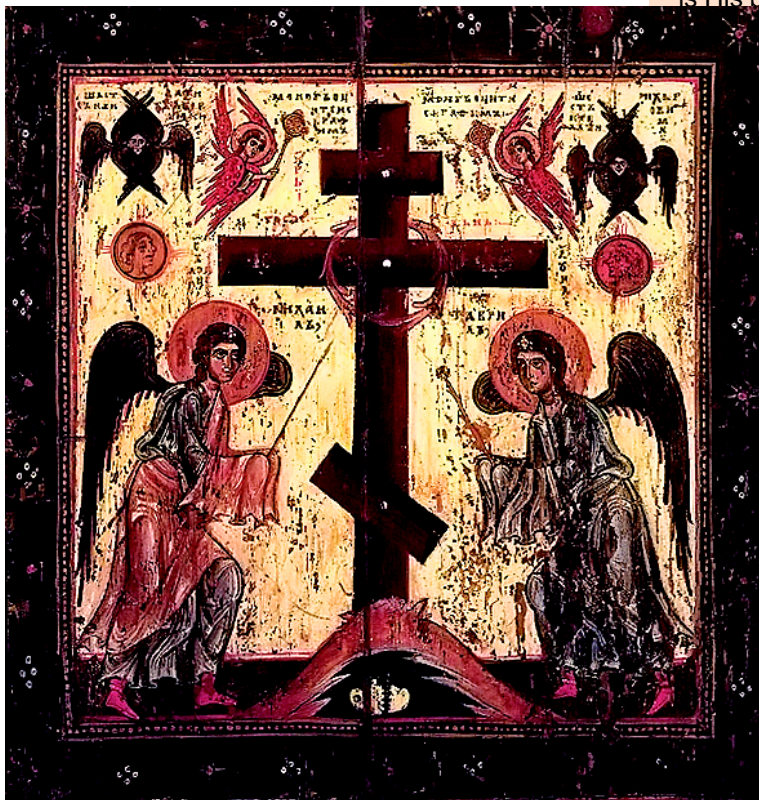
eternal Father...

underwent the passion not from any natural necessity, but for the sake of the mystery of man's salvation; and that His submitting to the passion was not from His being compelled thereto, but of His own will.... God suffered, therefore, because He voluntarily submitted Himself to the passion.... He offered Himself, therefore, to the death of the accursed, so that He might break the curse of the Law. He offered Himself as a victim voluntarily to God the Father, so that by means of a voluntary victim the curse which was consequent upon

the discontinuance of the required victim might be resolved.

Saint Cyprian of Carthage

Who is more a priest of the Most High God than Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, when He offered sacrifice to God the Father, offered the very same that Melchisedech had offered — bread and wine — which is in fact His Body and Blood! ■



UP FRONT

Death watch

It is not uncommon that the subject of suicide is raised, especially in times like our own, in which we hear daily of an increase in teen suicide as a “side effect” of certain prescription meds, suicide bombers, suicide as a means of “death with dignity” for the terminally ill, and the like.

Our faith teaches us that, no matter *how* hopeless our plight in life may seem, with God there is *always* cause to have hope. Our Lord continually emphasized this by His words and deeds, and most specifically by the miracles He performed which transformed what often seemed to be hopeless situations into revelations of God’s abiding presence in the world.

As seen in the image of Judas, who in despair and hopelessness hung himself – he, like the Wise Thief, *could have* repented and received forgiveness – when one forgets that “with God, all things are possible,” one can indeed sink to such a state of despair that suicide might appear to be a solution. However, as we know, suicide is never a valid solution to life’s trials and tribulations; as such, it might be seen as the ultimate form of despair, the ultimate admission that even with God, there is no hope for one’s life and crises.

God is the Source and Giver of life – life that is sustained by the Holy Spirit, Who dwells within each of us. To willfully take one’s life, then, is to willfully cut oneself off from the Source of one’s life, to project a sense of hopelessness that cannot be reversed, even by the God Who sent His Son into this world precisely to give us the faith and hope to see, to accept, and to share His divine love. There is no problem, no crisis, no sin too great to overcome, if only we hold fast to that hope which is, as Scripture teaches, in us by virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Who abides in us and claims us as God’s own.

Of course, there are many factors to consider in cases of suicide, just as there are many factors that can lead someone to despair and hopelessness. There are those who would, on the one hand, see suicide as an unpardonable sin, one that precludes one’s salvation. On the other hand, there are those who would acknowledge that one who takes his or her own life cannot possibly be acting in a “clear and conscious manner,” being overcome by darkness or intense mental or emotional distress. In the case of any given suicide, of course, it is difficult to discern the multitude of factors that can lead to such personal destruction, causing many to reserve personal judgment against a victim of suicide. Complex as the issue can be, one thing, however, is

Death to 30

The Paschal Message of Metropolitan Herman

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

This is the day of resurrection! Let us be illumined by the Feast! Let us embrace each other! Let us call “brothers” even to those that hate us, and forgive all by the resurrection! [The Paschal Stikhiri]

Dearly beloved in Christ,

As we began our journey to Pascha, we approached one another, seeking and offering forgiveness as that essential first step on the road of repentance. Today, as we celebrate the completion of our journey, we celebrate that forgiveness which comes from the empty tomb, that forgiveness which tears down the walls of separation and challenges us to embrace friend and foe alike for the sake of the One Who invites us to partake of His divine nature.

Far from being a celebration of events past, our proclamation of the Resurrection is rooted in an event that transcends time and space. As such, we literally participate in a reality that is ever-present, that knows “no sunset,” that unites that which has gone before us with that which is yet to come in a timeless celebration of the most perfect example and experience of love revealed to mankind. We, at one and the same time, stand with the women at the entrance to the sepulchre and in the midst of the eternal Kingdom of God. Our hearts are illumined. Our eyes are opened as the risen Savior challenges us to look beyond the cares and sorrows of this world to the joys promised in the life of the world to come. Our envy and passions, our pride and hatred, are rendered meaningless as we partake of the eternal victory and new life so freely offered to us by Christ, the eternal Victor.

Just as our journey began with the call to seek and to offer forgiveness, so too the true joy of Holy Pascha is fulfilled in forgiveness. Our Savior makes no compromise in this regard. The Holy Fathers remind us that the warm fire of God’s love indeed purifies and purges us when we reach out to one another in love; at the same time, it torments us when our hearts remain cold, when we seek forgiveness yet fail to offer it, when we refuse to embrace others with that “holy kiss” of forgiveness, even for the sake of the Resurrection.

To say that we live in unsettled times, filled with anger and hatred, is an understatement. News and images of war and fear, inhumanity and death, flash before our eyes every day. The world sees aggression as a sign of strength, forgiveness, and reconciliation as a sign of weakness. Yet, in the midst of such chaos, the light of the empty tomb shines forth to those who embrace the risen Savior, the Light of the world “Who can never be overcome by darkness” and Who challenges us to let our light shine before mankind. May we be accounted worthy of our calling by offering to one and all that divine forgiveness Our Lord so abundantly grants to those who accept – and offer – it. And may the eternal joy of His Kingdom consume us here and now, even as we anticipate the fulfillment of all things in the Risen Christ.

With love in the Risen Lord,


+ HERMAN

Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Father John Breck

"But some doubted"

Working miracles against doubt

The "living tradition" of Orthodox Christianity teaches us that nothing is fortuitous, nothing occurs by chance. God is present and acting at every moment and through all things, in order to guide human life and the whole of creation toward fulfillment of His will. This means that He takes upon Himself our struggles and pain, just as He bestows upon us our hope and our joy. In some mysterious way, He also shares in our doubt.

In the biblical accounts, profound meaning is often expressed by small, easily overlooked details. One of the most striking of those details appears at the close of Saint Matthew's Gospel. In obedience to Christ's command, the disciples leave Jerusalem and come to an unnamed mountain in Galilee. The evangelist continues: "And when they saw Him" – the risen Christ – "they worshipped Him. But some doubted."

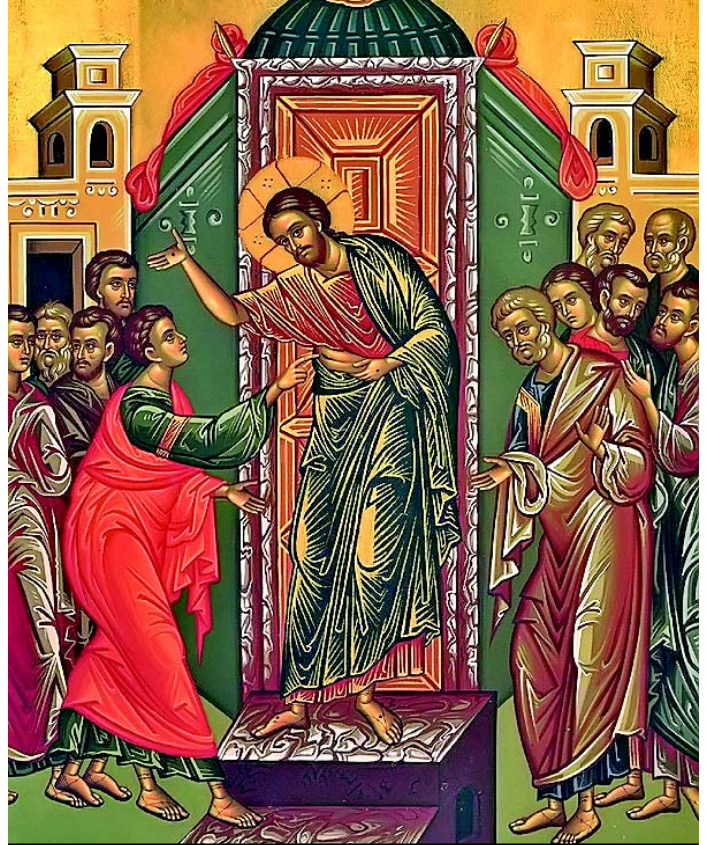
The other Gospels also bear witness to the doubt experienced by some of those who encountered either the empty tomb or the risen Lord. Saint Mark's Gospel seems originally to have ended with 16:8. Here the women disciples flee from the tomb with "trembling and astonishment...; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." The tradition contained in Mark's longer ending [16:14] shows Jesus upbraiding the other disciples "for their unbelief and hardness of heart," because they refused to believe the women's testimony once it was delivered to them.

In his resurrection narrative, Saint Luke attempts to soften the disciples' reaction with a qualification [24:41]: "And while they still disbelieved for joy...." Their disbelief, nevertheless, was real.

Finally, the evangelist John focuses the disciples' doubt in the person of Thomas [20:27]. It was his unbelief that prompted Jesus to show His hands and side as proof of His bodily resurrection. In response, Thomas uttered the Scriptures' most sublime confession: "My Lord and my God!" Yet later on the disciples continued to doubt, as shown by their reaction to Jesus' appearance on the Sea of Tiberius [21:12].

In his homily on the end of Matthew's Gospel, Saint John Chrysostom makes a significant point regarding the evangelist's candid admission that some of the disciples doubted, even in the presence of the risen Lord. To Chrysostom, this demonstrates the truthfulness of the tradition, and the willingness on the part of each evangelist to speak frankly of the disciples' weaknesses and shortcomings.

Holy Pascha, the celebration of Christ's victory over death, most often elicits among Orthodox Christians an unparalleled outpouring of thanksgiving and joy. This response comes to its fullest expression in the Holy Week services, culminating with the midnight Paschal office, followed by the Divine Liturgy. Pascha is, above all, a feast of light and joy, of mutual embracing in mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. It offers a glorious



"My Lord and My God!" As the risen Christ appeared to the apostles in the upper room, Thomas utters Scriptures' most sublime confession.

foretaste of the Great Feast, the Everlasting Banquet to come.

Yet, with all its brightness and celebration of victory, some doubted then, and some continue to do so even now.

When I look at the poverty of my faith and the paucity of works of love that flow from it, I wonder just how I came to believe in the first place. All it takes is an unpleasant phone call, or too many demands on my time, or simply getting out of the wrong side of the bed in the morning, and I find myself in a mild depression. In that state I can't pray – no, the truth is, I simply don't want to pray. I just want to be left alone: by family, by friends, by people in the Church, and maybe above all, by God. Then doubt sets in, not as a rational rejection of the object of my belief, but as an escape from myself and my bad mood, my inability to deal adequately with myself or others in a sinful and fallen world. Doubt in those times is a convenience.

There are other moments, though, when doubt takes on a more insidious form. A news report of thousands killed in an earthquake, or of terrorist bombings that wantonly destroy and maim innocent people, or of priests arrested for child molestation: these things sometimes call up a frustrated and angry question – "Why, God, do you allow it?" – as if I could somehow fathom the mystery of God's workings and will, even if they were revealed to me.

But of all these, the worst is when I allow the faith I have been given by God's grace to be shaken by "thoughts," those demonic voices the Fathers knew so well, that whisper into my ear: "Is it really true? Isn't it just a myth, neatly constructed, wrapped and delivered by those who want to believe, and therefore want us to believe, yet whose assertions are less fact than wishful thinking?" In those most awful moments, it feels as though the substance of my faith is slipping away, that my mind is betraying me

InSites

Doubt from 7

by offering some rationalization I can't logically reject. Then life itself seems to be ebbing away, and with it peace, longing, and any sense of hope. Those are the worst times, and they have the power to destroy.

The thread that up to now has somehow bound me to a modicum of faith, despite myself, is the memory of a few holy people and a few holy things I have been blessed to know and experience. The face, wrinkled and radiant, of an old Russian woman who suffered through the Revolution, lost her family in their own holocaust, and spent decades in exile. An icon that wept tears of myrrh and filled the sacred space of the little parish church with the perfume of heaven. A Liturgy sung with such power and grace that the presence of myriad angels and saints became palpable. A gesture of wholly disinterested, sacrificial love that exhausted the giver yet brought new life to the one who received. A little child who, many years ago, brought me to tears with the simple question, "Daddy, does God love me as much as He loves you?"

These are the things that work miracles against my doubt. Like the faith I claim, and so often take for granted, they are pure gift, wholly unmerited.

When I feel God and life and truth slipping away into a fog of doubt, there remains that perilously thin thread of memory: the memory of grace, of goodness, and of love. Then, because God is infinitely faithful, and because countless souls before me have known and lived in the truth and joy of Christ's resurrection, I find myself able to make the simple confessional prayer we are all invited to make: "Lord, I believe; help me in my unbelief!" ■

Fr. John Breck *chairs the OCA Medical/Ethics Commission.*

Mary Ann Bulko

Anticipation

Christ gave Himself for us.

Now it's time to give ourselves for Him!

For the 40 days of the Paschal season, we sing the song of victory: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."

But how do we reconcile the joy of these words with the realities of growing tension and conflict in the Middle East, the threat of nuclear or bio-terrorism, the proclivity of sexual predators in our midst, and all the other darkness portrayed in the media news?

An article that appeared 25 years ago in an issue of *Life Transfigured*, a journal published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA, noted that "Christ says that the heart can be both paradise and hell at the same time, because according to the Holy Fathers, paradise and hell are not geographical places, but rather states of mind." The article goes on to say that remorse is only possible "because man has both God and the devil present

and can compare the two." Only because of this reality can a change of heart occur.

As much as one might believe the possibility that some persons may be "pure evil" by their actions, i.e. the suicide terrorists of 9/11, we have to believe that God, Who is everywhere present and Who fills all things, descended into hades to release the captives held therein. If Christ can trample down death, it follows that He can trample, crush, and eliminate every other dark evil and horror we can imagine as well.

On the other hand, when humans love each other in the spiritual sense, they actually recognize God dwelling within the other. Ultimately, even the sinner is a temple, albeit a desecrated temple, of the Living God, in need of repair and rededication through repentance.

In Romans 8, we read of tribulation, distress, persecution, and peril. Yet, while Christian life involves suffering, Saint Paul rejoices in "the sure hope of glory." In his time, those who witnessed their faith were prime targets for martyrdom, perhaps the ultimate suffering. But today, Christians and non-Christians alike certainly face sufferings. The question that must be asked is whether the suffering is necessarily for the sake of the faith, or whether it is due to sin. We are reminded in Matthew 6:34 about anxiety in general and the fact that we should "let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." So, indeed there is a guarantee that there will be troubles and, consequently, sufferings!

Even nature suffers along with mankind because of sin. Man is called to be a steward of and intercessor with nature before the Creator. While there is beauty in nature, and while all created by God is good, it is still subject to cataclysmic events, because it too reflects the fallen human nature.

And so, how can it be that, as we sing the triumphant song of victory over sin and death through Christ Jesus, we are still subject to sin? Is it because we remain seekers of the pleasures and passions of this world? Do we truly love our enemies? Do we really strive to be "living temples," or are we ourselves yet "stained vessels?" Saint Paul observes that "it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" [1 Corinthians 4:2]. Can we claim to be trustworthy? Have we made every effort to bring others to Christ? Why is it that our glorious message of hope as had seemingly little effect on this fallen world?

Saint Paul wisely reminds us "not to pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, Who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" [1 Corinthians 4:5].

And so, another year passes, and we again celebrate the resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we wait – with patience, courage, endurance, hope, forgiveness, and love in our hearts. Christ has done all He can do. He has given Himself for us, enabling us to be partakers of His divine nature. Now we must give ourselves for Him. Until each one of us becomes truly Christ-like in this world, we will remain on the cross of this world, but knowing full well that His Kingdom, His Glory, and true life are all within that cross's reach. ■

Mary Ann Bulko is a member of Holy Trinity Church, Randolph, NJ and a frequent contributor to The Orthodox Church.

Father Alexis Vinogradov

The Church as “home”

Raising our kids’ comfort level

On Christmas Eve, a small boy came forward to be anointed with oil at the Vigil service. He was whisked along a line of strangers, amid glowing candles in a dimly lit, crowded space that he had seen only a few times in his short life. The priest, approaching the boy’s tiny forehead with the oiled wand, watched the fear and hesitation coming from the wide, innocent eyes staring at the unfamiliar instrument. For the parent pushing this reluctant child along, this was an old custom, something one did on the feasts back in one’s homeland. And in that homeland the Church was indeed such a crowd of strangers that you saw a few times a year. But for the child, those bleak and terrified eyes signified only one question: “Who is this bearded stranger with the colored robes, and why is pointing that thing in my face?”

The same thing often happens in Communion lines, in which one sees the eager faces of joy and anticipation or the hesitant and fearful expression of a child about to receive an inoculation shot. Of course, at times, this has a bit to do with the child’s own character. But mostly this reflects on how we as parents expose our children to the life of the Church.

There is a typical pattern in most young families today. Starting out as kids raised in the Church, they discover life’s new and uncharted freedoms one they graduate, and one of these freedoms is the freedom *not* to attend services as they did in childhood. The pursuit of wealth, property, success, and partners takes over, and life’s possibilities seem limitless – “why do I need to thank God for what *I’ve* achieved by *my own* smarts and resources?” But invariably, marrying, settling down, and having their own children make instant adults out of these free youth. And with adulthood comes the need for stability, roots, hope, faith, and the desire to transmit something enduring and good to one’s children. Once more, the Church returns into one’s life.

But what these young parents have forgotten along the way is that the life of the Church was not transmitted to them by an occasional visit when they were young, but by a whole parental attitude towards the Church and its integration into the fabric of life. If indeed they were only brought a few times

when young, then what they themselves received was not a life integrated with God, but a “bit of religion,” like a pinch of added seasoning on chicken – but one could still eat the chicken with or without the seasoning! An integral Church life is one in which the child realizes that, for his or her parents, Church life is the same as breathing air! The child realizes, in other words, that *Church is home!*

This, ultimately is – and ought to be – the only agenda we can have in our children’s religious upbringing: to instill in them the sense that Church is our *real home*. But psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally, home is that to which we *return*, the familiar place of rest and refuge among familiar friends and those we love, after being among “wolves” and strangers, laboring and struggling to survive, all the while longing to be at home. When Church life becomes such an experience, then our very journey there is not regarded as some duty we have to perform *before* coming home, but precisely as that place of safety and familiarity to which we return, the place where we feel right *at home*.

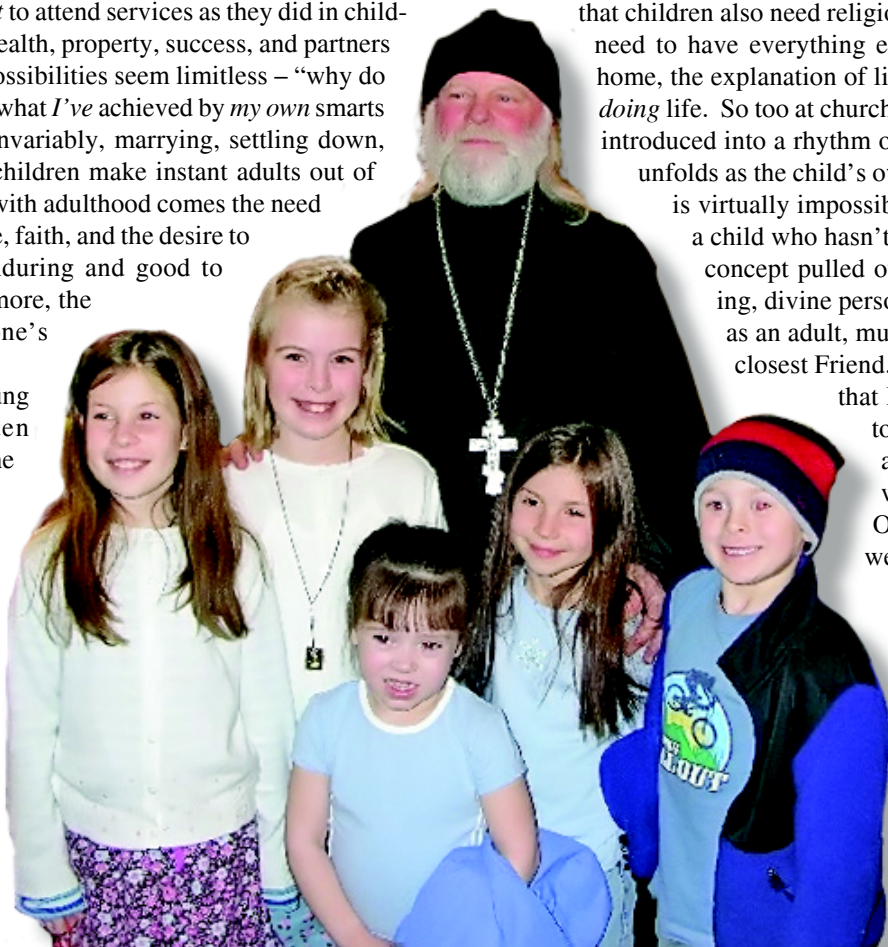
This is so easily seen by watching the children in our parishes. The children who are brought regularly are completely at home. They may bother some stodgy old-timers by running around, but this running is in itself a sign of their inner freedom, of their understanding of being at home with God. It is rather the annoyance of the adult that shows that the adult is *not* at home with God. On the other hand, the child who instinctively feels that this place is not “home” retreats into his or her shell and can’t wait to leave. This is easily seen in adults who are strangers to Church life as well.

As adults living in an information culture, we are convinced that children also need religious information, that they need to have everything explained. But just as at home, the explanation of life comes in the course of *doing* life. So too at church. Every child is naturally introduced into a rhythm of life, whose explanation unfolds as the child’s own curiosity blossoms. It is virtually impossible to speak about God to a child who hasn’t “felt” God. God is not a concept pulled out of a book, but the living, divine person, Jesus Christ, Whom I, as an adult, must know intimately as my closest Friend. It is only this friendship that I can share and “explain”

to a child. The rest is empty and useless theory, for which a child has no need. Over time, children see how we speak and act in the presence of this divine Friend, Whom we meet at church, at *His* home, which is both God’s home and our own.

Without diminishing the centrality of the Divine Liturgy,

Home to 10



InSites

Home from 9

I often think how the quiet of Vespers can often be a better “teacher” of this Church “homey-ness,” because the Divine Liturgy is usually active and filled with people, often straggling in to “perform” a religious “duty.” But at Vespers, one can introduce the child into a total antidote to the rushed and busy world outside. Here children can see us as adults taking time to light a candle in the dark, to come early and just to sit, stand, or kneel, doing nothing “useful” other than *being* with God in His house.

Of course, we need also to come to terms with what has happened to home life in general in our culture. There too, family members rush in and rush out, there is no sacred family dinner time or quiet time without the intrusion of music and TV, and everyone staring into a computer screen, communicating with everyone *except* those who are at home!

Perhaps, as hard as we work at it, if we don’t succeed at first where we live, we might make a concerted effort to discover our true “home” at church, to regularly “return” there to simply rest with our children, to let “God direct our steps” (as the priest says to the deacon when Liturgy starts), to discover therein our true brothers and sisters, our family in Christ. “those who do the will of my Father.” We will find after all, that in God’s home there is no urgent “project” to be done, that we don’t have to keep racing after some success or goal, that we have nothing to fear, and that we can happily grow old in His care, because in God there is no “aging.” All this our own children need to come and feel and experience and know, so that while the world with all its cares will absolutely, relentlessly, attempts to pull them into its grip, they will always know where their true “home” is. ■

Fr. Alexis Vinogradov is rector of St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY.

Serge Schmemmann

Let us pause...

A reflection on issues currently facing the Orthodox Church in America

Though I live in France, I have been following with growing dismay the dispute tearing our Church apart. Like many of you, I have not joined in the debate up until now, but have been praying that our bishops, priests, and faithful find a wise and equitable resolution to the serious problems that have been revealed in our Church. I am writing now to appeal to you all, Vladyki, Fathers, brothers, and sisters, to pause for a prayerful, lenten reflection on what is at stake.

There is no question that serious allegations have been made of highly troubling failings in the organization of the Orthodox Church in America. There are members of the Church who believe that it would have been better not to tarnish the image of the OCA by making these problems public; there are others who believe full disclosure is essential if our Church is to be cleansed and set aright. I believe that all those who have spoken on both

sides of the debate, on the web and in private meetings, acted out of honest and profound concern for our Church. But it is imperative now to declare that this stage is finished: The issues have been made public, and our Metropolitan has ordered an investigation. We can question whether it was right to dismiss our Chancellor, we can question whether the process that has begun is necessary, proper or sufficient. But there is nothing more to be gained from arguments and reproaches: for better or for worse, we have embarked on a delicate, critical and perilous journey of self-examination.

At this stage, I earnestly believe that to continue to argue is to place the Church in far greater danger than it is in already. Internally, we risk creating permanent divisions and enmities; externally, we risk more damaging scrutiny and publicity. I know what I’m talking about: I have been a reporter all my life. The only question we must all address now, together, is how we can pull back, how we can restore unity, trust, and faith in our dear OCA.

I am writing with three more weeks to go in Great Lent. This is a time of humility, of reflection, of silence. It is a time to set aside passions and bitterness. Think of all that our Orthodox Church has achieved in America. We took the deep faith that our forebears brought from captive and impoverished lands and gave it new life in a great new land, so that we could all “breathe free.” We have parishes in every major city of North America; we have opened seminaries, published books, produced new generations of priests and theologians, assigned chaplains to our soldiers. Our parishes are filled with children and light. We have truly created an Orthodox Church in America. Do we really want to jeopardize all this? Of course we have also stumbled and sinned, and this is the time of year when we confront that. But the confrontation must be a process of renewal and resurrection, not destruction.

So let us pause. Let the web sites and exchanges fall silent for a while. If we are approached by reporters, let’s tell them there’s an investigation under way, and we have nothing more to say for now. Let’s resist angry thoughts and recriminations and think instead about how best we can heal ourselves and our Church. Our Metropolitan has taken a resolute and fateful step. Let’s pray for him and for our entire Church, that we may all emerge from this ordeal stronger and purer. ■

Serge Schmemmann is chairman of the OCA Office of Communications.

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InMemoriam

Editorial request: Please inform the TOC editorial office by phone [630/668-3071] or e-mail [jjm@oca.org] when a clergy or clergy wife death occurs so announcements may be made on the OCA web site and in TOC in a timely manner.

The V. Rev. Victor Sokolov

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Very Rev. Victor Sokolov, 59, dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral here, fell asleep in the Lord after a lengthy battle with cancer on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 12, 2006.

Born in Russia on February 21, 1947, he was a dissident writer and human rights activist in the USSR. His writings, published in the underground *samizdat*, were smuggled into the West and broadcast back into the USSR via Radio Liberty and Voice of America. In 1975, he became an Orthodox Christian; the same year he married an American, Barbara Wrahtz of Santa Cruz, CA, who had been working temporarily in Moscow.

Because of his anti-Soviet activities, he was forced to immigrate to the US, where he was reunited with his wife who was his true friend, companion, and the mother of their five children. Soon after his arrival in the US, the Soviet government took the extraordinary measure of stripping him of Soviet citizenship and banning him from ever returning to his homeland. He continued to write while teaching Russian language and literature at various colleges and universities.

In 1985, he graduated from Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY. As an Orthodox priest, he served Holy Resurrection Church, Vancouver, BC, Canada; various missions; and Saints Peter and Paul Church, Buffalo, NY. In 1991, he was appointed dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral. The greatest legacy of his pastorate, the longest in the cathedral's history, is the atmosphere of mutual love and friendship that reigns in the parish.

In addition to his beloved wife, Father Victor is mourned by his children: Deacon Kirill Sokolov and his wife, Sophia, with their child Nicholas; Philip Sokolov and his wife Marie; and daughters Tamara, Anna, and Maria. In Russia, he is survived by his mother, Tamara, and his sisters Adelia and Olga.

Funeral services were celebrated at Holy Trinity Cathedral on March 16, with interment at Oak Mound Cemetery, Healdsburg, CA.

Donations to the Sokolov Family Fund will be gratefully received at Holy Trinity Cathedral, 1520 Green St., San Francisco, CA 94123.

May Father Victor's memory be eternal!

– Deacon Kirill Sokolov ■

Igumen John [Scratch]

OTTAWA, ON, CANADA – Igumen John [Scratch], 64, a member of the Monastic Community of Saint Silouan and former dean of Annunciation Cathedral here, fell asleep in the Lord on the morning of January 15, 2006.

Born in Lethbridge, AB, Canada on August 2, 1941, the son of a Pentecostal minister, he spent his early life with his family on missions to the third world and the Orient. It was during one of these trips that he first encountered Orthodoxy in Shanghai, China, in the presence of Saint John Maximovich. Father John would often say that his time in China was a definitive factor and blessing in his journey to and in Orthodoxy.

In 1967, while studying at Bishops University near Sherbrook, PQ, he married Suzanne Park. Ordained in the Anglican communion in 1969, he, his wife, and their six young children were received into the Orthodox faith at Saint Nicholas parish, Ottawa, 10 years later. Soon, he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood, while working as a security guard to support his family. In 1980, Father John and a handful of people founded Holy Transfiguration Mission, the first English-language mission in Ottawa.

In March 1987, his wife suffered a major stroke, forcing Father John into semi-retirement to care for her and their children. Still, he ministered to his flock, incorporating the mission's faithful into Ottawa's Annunciation-Saint Nicholas Cathedral.

On January 10, 1998, Father John's wife fell asleep in the Lord. After a period of discernment, he came out of retirement to serve with the Very Rev. Dannis Pihach at Saint Herman Sobor, Edmonton, AB. He again entered retirement after a second, more serious heart attack, at which time he returned to Ottawa to be with his family and grandchildren, and later to witness the ordination of his eldest son, Gregory, to the diaconate in 2003.

In August 2004, Father John became, as His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada described, "what he was" as he embraced the monastic life. It was in these last few years that his witness of faith, perseverance, and suffering for the love of the Lord were truly blessed and revealed to others. Shortly before his death, he was diagnosed with a large tumor, yet immediately he blessed and thanked God for all that was given him in this life and accepted the diagnosis with confidence in God's love.

Father John is survived by six children: Deacon Gregory and Taesia Scratch; Jeremy and Helen Scratch, Subdeacon Sebastian and Helen Scratch, Lydia and Michael Holden, Subdeacon John and Michelle Scratch, Mary-Teresa and Karl Nye; one sister; and several grandchildren.

The Monastic Rite of Burial was celebrated at Annunciation Cathedral, with interment at Pinecrest Cemetery.

May Igumen John's memory be eternal! ■

Mat. Margaret Ressetar

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Matushka Margaret Ressetar, 100, wife of the late Right Rev. Dimitri J. Ressetar, fell asleep in the Lord at Saint Vincent Hospital here February 17, 2006, two days shy of her 101st birthday.

For many years, she and her husband, who died in 1984, ministered to parishes in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Connecticut. To mark her 100th birthday, she was presented with the Order of Saint Innocent, Silver Class, the Orthodox Church in America's highest honor.

Survivors include her son, the Very Rev. Daniel D. Ressetar, rector of Christ the Savior Church, Harrisburg, PA; two daughters, Mrs. Vera Bortniak, Shillington, PA, and Mrs. Anne Boyko, Hudson, FL; 11 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. Another son, Prof. John D. Ressetar, who for many years served as choir master at Archangel Michael Church, Broadview Heights, OH, predeceased her in 2002.

Funeral services were celebrated at Saint Tikhon Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA, with interment in the monastery cemetery.

May Matushka Margaret's memory be eternal! ■

Mat. Helen Donovan

PHILIPSBURG, PA – Matushka Helen Donovan, 83, wife of the Very Rev. Daniel Donovan, rector of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist Church here, fell asleep in the Lord at the Altoona Regional Health System, Bon Secours Hospital Campus, on Monday, February 20, 2006.

The daughter of the late George and Mary Stropko, she was born on December 2, 1922 in Johnstown, PA. Together with Father Daniel, she faithfully served parishes in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, and was especially involved in religious education ministries.

She is survived by her husband, Father Daniel; three daughters: Faith Johnson and her husband, the Very Rev. George, of Johnstown, PA; Elaine Hirschberg and her husband James of Port Washington, NY; and Catherine Dixon and her husband Michael of Fairfax, VA; and six grandchildren.

Funeral services were celebrated at the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist Church on February 23, with interment at Saint Tikhon's Monastery cemetery, South Canaan, PA.

Memorials may be made to Holy Myrrhbearer's Monastery, 144 Bert Washburn Rd., Otego, NY 13825-2265 or Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 321 Monastery Ln., Ellwood City, PA 16117.

May Matushka Helen's memory be eternal. ■

OCA News Notes Notices

Metropolitan Herman pledges resolution to financial concerns

Mid-lenten letter calls for “understanding, forgiveness, and prayers” during investigation

In response to numerous concerns with regard to the financial situation of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman issued a letter dated April 9, 2006.

“Our holy Orthodox Tradition presents Great Lent as the sacred season for us to live more fully the call of the Christian ‘way of life’ in imitation of our Savior – to be more Christ-like, to come closer to God Himself,” Metropolitan Herman’s letter begins. “It is a time for us to pray more fervently, to fast more strictly, to give alms more generously, and to repent, confess our sins and forgive one another in order that we may be forgiven by our Heavenly Father. In doing these things in the name of the Lord, we will be made worthy to attain unto and worship the holy Resurrection.

“This year’s lenten journey to Holy Pascha in our Orthodox Church in America

has been marred by serious questions regarding the financial accountability of the Central Church Administration,” the letter continues. “The quest for truth and accountability, the necessity of maintaining honesty and integrity in church administration, and the restoration of trust at all levels are good and noble and virtuous. But these questions have escalated into criticisms, allegations, and discord that have ripped the very fibers of our Holy Church, tearing asunder the peace and love and unity among her pious children. They have become the source of divisions and scandal, to the detriment of the Church’s prestige and good name – in public venues, from the internet in individual homes to the front pages of major newspapers across the country.

“It is time for this turmoil in our parishes, in our dioceses, and throughout the Church to cease and desist, especially as

we approach Holy Week,” Metropolitan Herman’s letter continues. “We must lay aside these earthly cares and re-focus our spiritual lives on the ‘one thing that is needed... that good part, which will not be taken away’ [Luke 10:42]. We must concentrate our efforts on prayer and fasting, almsgiving and repentance, confession and mutual forgiveness. We must heed the call of the Holy Apostle: ‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?’ [Hebrews 2:3].

“Beyond our own spiritual lives, the glorious work of Christ’s Church must continue,” the letter reads. “The tasks of illuminating and baptizing catechumens, renewing parish life and growth, theologically educating and spiritually forming future clergy in our seminaries, and planting missions in places where there are no churches must continue until Christ comes again. Our faith must be strong enough to overcome every challenge, trusting totally in His promise: ‘I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ [Matthew 16:18].

Announcing his intention to initiate an investigation of allegations, Metropolitan Herman writes that “the work of resolving this controversy has begun on behalf of our whole Church. A law firm has been retained to undertake an internal investigation of all allegations regarding the finances of the Church that have been brought to my attention. An independent audit of all accounts for the past two years, an examination of the disposition of all monies collected through appeals for the past five years, and an evaluation of chancery personnel and operations have all been initiated and will be ongoing. As Primate of the Church, I pledge to you that my office, the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Metropolitan Council, and the Chancery staff will cooperate fully with the auditors and investigators until these issues are resolved. As the independent audits for 2004 and for the special appeals are completed, they will be made available on our OCA web site in a manner similar to those of other government-regulated not-for-profit religious organizations. Additional audit reports as well as the results of the internal investigation will also become part of our public records when deemed

Metropolitan meets with Administrative Committee, announces internal investigation

In response to questions regarding financial accountability, the Administrative Committee of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America met in extraordinary session at the Chancery, Syosset, NY, on March 16, 2006.

During the meeting, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman announced that, as Primate, he has retained the law firm of Proskauer Rose LLP to undertake an internal investigation of allegations relating to the finances of the Church.

He also announced that the accounting firm of Lambrides, Lamos, Moulthrop, LLP, presently engaged to conduct an Independent Audit of all Church financial accounts for the years 2004 and 2005, has been engaged further to examine the disposition of monies collected through OCA appeals from 2001 through 2005.

Metropolitan Herman also stated that he will authorize any additional engagements with the accounting firm as requested by the attorneys conducting the internal investigation.

He also announced that Protopresbyter Robert S. Kondratich had been relieved of his duties service as OCA Chancellor, a position he held since 1989. ■

OCA NewsNotesNotices

I wish to state unequivocally that I take full responsibility for what may have happened during my service as Primate of the Church.... If I have failed in any way to do that, I ask for your forgiveness and God's guidance to enable me to undertake whatever corrective measures may still be necessary. To all those who have been scandalized and pained by the weakness of the human aspect of the Church, and to all those whose faith has been challenged by it, I apologize with my whole heart."



appropriate to do so by the investigators. The Holy Synod of Bishops, the Metropolitan Council, and then all of you will be made aware of the findings in a timely fashion and with good order.

"I have further initiated 'Best Practices' procedures in financial accountability and other administrative practices established for not-for-profit religious institutions, in order to insure that mistakes will not be made in the future," the letter continues. "I realize that for some, these measures were taken too late; for others, they are too severe. I know that whatever decisions I make, I cannot please everyone.

"I wish to state unequivocally that I take full responsibility for what may have happened during my service as Primate of the Church," Metropolitan Herman's letter continues. "The Holy Apostle commands me as first hierarch of the Church 'that you should set in order the things that are wanting' [Titus 1:5]. If I have failed in any way to do that, I ask for your forgiveness and God's guidance to enable me to undertake whatever corrective measures may still be necessary. To all those who have been scandalized and pained by the weaknesses of the human aspect of the Church, and to all those whose faith has been challenged because of it, I apologize with my whole heart. I beseech the Lord, the divine Head of the Church, to heal and strengthen these members of His Body through His mercy and compassion and love for mankind.

"Again, I ask for your understanding and forgiveness, and for your prayers for myself, for the hierarchs of our Holy Synod, for our clergy and for all our faithful," the letter continues, adding that "the time has

come for us to unite our efforts to restore peace and harmony in our Church. If we are to become the co-workers with Christ that we are called to be, we must place our focus on our Savior, His saving mission, and our shared participation in that saving mission. We must direct our energies to the work to which each of us has been called: our own salvation and the salvation of those around us.

Calling upon the entire membership of the Church to assist in restoring "wholeness" to the Church, Metropolitan Herman's letter continues by asking, "If a loved one in your family were suffering in pain or ravaged by some disease, each of you would come to their aid with every possible human and spiritual resource. Our Holy Mother, the Church, has been ravaged by an illness that has taken a serious toll. I implore you, as her children, to do all that you can to help restore her to wellness and strength, beauty and dignity, purity and holiness. She is the Bride of Christ whom He loves, for whom He gave His life '...that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish' [Ephesians 5:27]. Now is the time for us to restore our Holy Mother to wholeness with our love.

"Shortly before His saving Passion and Death on the Cross, Christ prayed to His Heavenly Father for His Church: '...that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me' [John 17:21]," the letter concludes. "His prayer was not only for those twelve Apostles present around

the table of the Mystical Supper; it is for all the members of our Orthodox Church in America today. Orthodoxy is living proof that the power of a unified witness can save the world with which it comes into contact. More importantly, it can save our part of the world right around us. As we relive the events of our salvation this coming Holy Week, let us lay aside what has divided our Church and ourselves, and let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God and to the work of saving souls to which we have been called. May He help us and strengthen us and bless our every good effort." ■

Holy Synod calls for financial accountability at extraordinary session

At an extraordinary session of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America chaired by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman on March 1, 2006, a number of decisions were made "to encourage financial accountability and trust" in light of concerns with regard to the Church's past and current financial situation and practices.

In a statement signed by all diocesan bishops, several concrete steps were announced. Foremost is the implementation of "Best Practices for Non-Profit Financial Accountability" to ensure clear and decisive financial governance and transparency of financial data and performance, the adoption of ethics and conflict of interest policies, the implementation of appropriate financial controls, and the conduct of annual independent financial audits. Monitoring emerging non-profit issues as they relate to the OCA will also be pursued.

The members of the Holy Synod further noted their desire to obtain a report from the external CPA firm of Lambrides, Lamos, Moulthrop, LLP, on the disposition of all monies collected through all Church-wide appeals from 2001 for presentation at their spring 2006 session. The hierarchs also noted that independent audits for all 2004 and 2005 accounts will be conducted "in conformity with past

Synod to 14

Bishop Alejo greets Ecumenical Patriarch in Mexico City

His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, visited Mexico February 8-12, 2006, marking the first time an Ecumenical Patriarch has visited the predominantly Roman Catholic country.

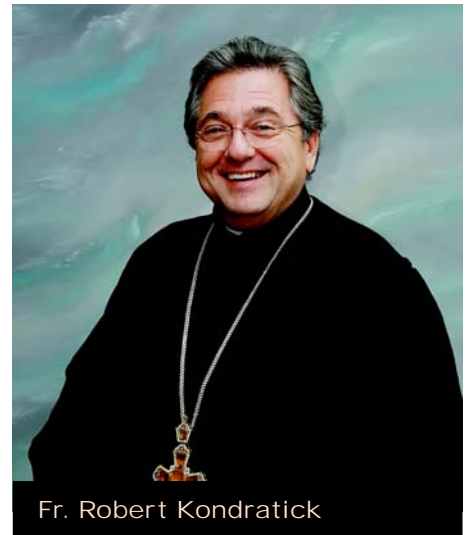
During the historic visit, Patriarch Bartholomew met with his Grace, Bishop Alejo of Mexico City of the Orthodox Church in America; His Eminence, Metropolitan Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Metropolitanate of Central America; His Eminence, Metropolitan Anthony of the Antiochian Orthodox Church; and numerous clergy representing the nation's Orthodox communities.

Patriarch Bartholomew also met with

numerous representatives of the Mexican government and officials of the Roman Catholic Church.

Patriarch Bartholomew was met at the Mexico City airport by religious and state representatives on February 8. Later that evening, he attended a reception hosted by Metropolitan Anthony.

The following day, Patriarch Bartholomew delivered a lecture on ecological concerns and was honored at a private gathering at the residence of Mexican President Vicente Fox. Accompanied by Roman Catholic officials, he also visited the famous Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. ■



Fr. Robert Kondratick

Fr. Kondratick released from chancellor duties

At an extraordinary session of the Administrative Committee on March 16, 2006, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman announced that Protopresbyter Robert S. Kondratick had been released from duties as chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America.

Following his ordination to the priesthood in 1969, Father Kondratick served as rector of Saint John the Baptist Church, Nanticoke, PA prior to his appointment as secretary to His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius in 1984. Two years later, he was given the additional assignment of OCA secretary. On November 1, 1988, he was named acting chancellor, while on August 29 of the following year he was appointed chancellor. In 1994, he was elevated to the rank of protopresbyter. In 2004, he was awarded a Synodal citation in recognition of his years of labor as chancellor.

Among Father Kondratick's accomplishments as chancellor was the establishment of the OCA's strong network of departments, boards, and commissions. He is credited with overseeing several All-American Councils and expanding the gathering's format. He also served on numerous OCA boards and commissions; as a member of the boards of trustees of Saint Vladimir's Seminary and Saint Tikhon's Seminary; as a member of the board of International Orthodox Christian Charities; and in numerous other capacities for Church-related and other organizations. He also represented the OCA at numerous gatherings and events nationally and internationally. ■

As Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I presides at the Divine Liturgy in Mexico City's Holy Wisdom Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Bishop Alejo [far right] prays with other hierarchs.



Synod from 13

Extraordinary session

practice" by the same external CPA firm, which they instructed to offer "fair and impartial assessments of [the OCA's] financial controls and accounting results." The firm will also provide recommendations on how the process can be improved and made more transparent, disciplined,

and accountable."

Finally, the members of the Holy Synod will review the independently audited 2004 and 2005 reports and the report on the Church-wide appeals at their spring 2006 session and "take such action as may be appropriate," such as the establishment of a special committee of review.

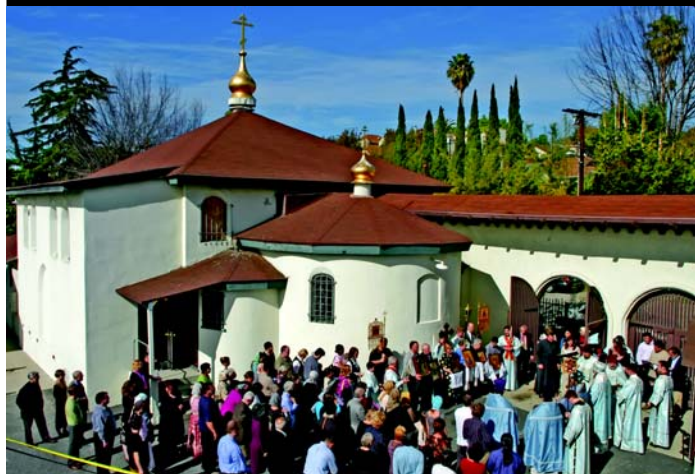
The spring session of the Holy Synod will convene in late May 2006. ■

LA cathedral celebrates feastday

His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West and His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley presided at the celebration of the patronal feast of Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA, during the first weekend of February.

The cathedral, named in honor of the Icon of the Mother of God "Rescuer of the Perishing," was established in 1922. ■

Festal procession makes its way around LA's Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral.



Russian film crew visits Archives

A film crew from Kazan, Russia, led by historian Dmitri Khafizov, visited the Archives of the Orthodox Church in America on March 28, 2006, to film material for a documentary on the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God being produced by a Kazan TV network in close cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Mr. Khafizov's extensive investigations and publications on the Kazan Icon over many years, including previous research visits to the OCA Archives, were instrumental in accomplishing the ancient icon's return to Russia from the Vatican in 2004. In the

Archivist Alexis Liberovsky, holding reproduction of the Kazan Icon, speaks with Russian film crew.



SVS dean ordained to diaconate

Prof. John D. Erickson, dean of Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY, was ordained to the diaconate by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, on January 30, 2006, the patronal feastday of the school's Three Hierarchs Chapel. Pictured above with Deacon John [left] are His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius, retired; His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman; His Grace, Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos; and Helen Breslich Erickson. ■

1960s, this icon was in the US for several years under the care of the late Archbishop John [Shahovskoy] of San Francisco. During that period, the icon was notably made available for public veneration at the Orthodox pavilion chapel of the 1964 World's Fair in New York City.

Filming at the Archives included photographs and documents related to the icon's US sojourn and interviews with Mr. Alexis Liberovsky, OCA Archivist. The film crew also visited several OCA parishes and other venues across the country. ■



OCA Pension Board meets

Members of the Orthodox Church in America's Pension Board met at the Chancery in Syosset, NY on February 27, 2006.

Elected by the All-American Council to oversee administration of the pension plan, the board meets quarterly to review and ensure continued fiscal stability. ■

Nuns visit Ft. Jackson

Nuns from Saints Martha and Mary Monastery, Wagner, SC, recently visited Ft. Jackson, where they sang the responses to the Divine Liturgy served by Chaplain Peter Baktis for Orthodox military personnel. After the Liturgy, the nuns served a variety of home-made goodies. ■



Chaplain Alexander Webster with a chaplain from Romania in Kandahar, Afghanistan's Orthodox chapel.

Five chaplains serve Middle East during Holy Week, Pascha

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, ecclesiastical endorser for Orthodox military chaplaincies, recently reported that five Orthodox priests will serve troops in the Middle East during Holy Week and Pascha.

Currently on active duty are Chaplain (COL) Alexander Webster, ARMY; Chaplain (MAJ) Peter Darstsos, ARMY; Chaplain, Capt, Eugene Lahue, AIR FORCE; LT, CHC Stephen Duesenberry, NAVY; and LT, CHC Eugene Wozniak, Marines.

"Metropolitan Herman asks that the faithful remember our chaplains and their families, as well as our service men and women, in their prayers during this season," said the Very Rev. Ted Boback, dean of OCA military chaplains. "Ministering as they do in dangerous circumstances difficult for us to imagine, we pray that the Risen Lord will grant them comfort and His protection as they provide the sacraments and worship of the Church to our troops." ■

St. Vladimir's Seminary Summer Institute to be held June 25-30

The annual Saint Vladimir's Seminary Summer Institute will be held on the school's Crestwood, NY campus June 25-30, 2006.

The theme of this year's institute, "A Christian Ending to Our Life: The Mystery of Death," will be explored through lectures, classes, discussions, and active involvement in daily worship.

The institute is open to clergy and laity of all ages who are interested in expanding their knowledge of the Church.

Those in the liturgical music track will receive training in singing, conducting, and composition, while those in the theological and pastoral track will explore various topics related to death, ethics, and legal implications.

Also offered this year is an intensive 12 hour for-credit course taught by Dr. Albert Rossi on Christian counseling in relation to death and dying.

Visit the "Events" section on the SVS web site at www.svots.edu for additional information and registration forms. ■

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stewardship@oca.org.**



Seattle, WA Clergy and faithful gathered for Vespers at the OCA's St. Spiridon Cathedral.

Potomac, MD
Metropolitan Herman is welcomed to SS. Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church, where he delivered the homily during the pan-Orthodox Vesper service.



Chicago, IL Hierarchs attending Vespers at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Cicero, included [from left] Romanian Archbishop Nicolae, Greek Metropolitan Iakovos, Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest; and ROCOR Bishop Peter.

Coast to coast, faithful celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy

On the evening of the first Sunday of Great Lent, Orthodox Christians celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy with pan-Orthodox Vesper services.

Jackson, MS Area faithful celebrated Vespers at Holy Trinity-St. John Greek Orthodox Church.



Pt. Graham, AK New snowfall did not deter faithful from St. Herman Church from making procession with icons.



Stewardship

First things first

Reordering our priorities

FATHER JOHN DRESKO

A friend of mine used to have a hamster. He loved that hamster so much that he pampered it. He bought toys for its cage. He set up a “habitrail” so the creature wouldn’t be “bored.” He overfed it on a regular basis. In fact, he fed it *so* much – and it grew *so* fat! – that it regularly got stuck in the middle of the habitrail’s plastic tubing. Still, the hamster would not stop eating; if food was there, it ate it. Only through the discipline of the owner and an imposed diet was the hamster able to get back to the shape necessary to travel the habitrail safely and unimpeded.

So it is with us. During Great Lent and well beyond the Paschal season, we are reminded that we are unable to travel the “trail” the Lord has set before us because of our laziness, our lack of discipline, even the fatness of our souls and bodies. At the heart of Christian life is a “turning away” from those things that prevent us from following the path toward eternal life. We

fast physically and spiritually to get into “travel shape” – light and quick.

But our “journey to Pascha” involved more than refraining from food, attending additional services, and offering more prayers. It was also about reordering our priorities. In the Prophecy of Haggai, the people of Israel were told that they had nothing, have nothing, and will have nothing until they reordered their priorities. As Christian stewards, we are reminded of the very same thing.

Haggai reminded the people that until the temple of the Lord was built (and, by extension, *cared for*), they would have nothing. But once the temple was built, the seed was in the barn; the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree were all yielding their fruit, and the people were blessed.

So often in today’s world, we are tempted away from the proper priorities. The Church, especially as we experience it in our local parishes, often is the very last thing we care for when we use our talents, offer our time, and donate our trea-

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sure. Then we wonder why we are always looking for more time, or we wonder how we can pay our bills, only to be surprised that the special little talents we have are withering away.

As Orthodox Christians gather for the joyous celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection, we would do well to review the paths we have walked. Are we giving ourselves to Christ *first*, or *last*? Are we using everything that God has given us for *His* glory and the mission of *His* Church? Can we find the time to work 60 hours a week or to coach baseball and soccer, yet never find time to serve on the parish council? Do we not blink an eye at going out to dinner and spending \$100.00, while throwing \$10.00 or \$20.00 into the collection plate? Do we remodel and rewire the family room ourselves, while telling our pastors that they need to “find someone” to do the repairs around the church? Unless we care for the temple entrusted to us by the Lord, we will never have everything that God wants us to have. Those who are faithful over a little will be set over much.

Maybe the image of a fat, lazy hamster stuck in the tube, unable to reach its destination, is what we need to keep in mind when we consider what we offer to the Lord. The path is set before us; have we ordered our priorities in a way that allows us to travel it? Has our lenten effort been a series of external rules fulfilled, or a true journey to new life in the Resurrection? God is, first and foremost, a *giver*. We can do no less, and unless we give to Him and to the Church *first*, we cannot “unstick” ourselves.

If you would like more information on stewardship, giving or estate planning, or if you would like to arrange a workshop on stewardship or planned giving for your parish, please the OCA Office of Development and Planned Giving at 516/922-0550, ext. 150 or jdresko@oca.org. ■



Pray now, consider what will come to pass from from this day onward. Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the temple of the Lord, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I smote you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me,” says the Lord. “Consider from this day onward... since the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you.”

– Haggai 2:15-19

Liturgical Music

DAVID DRILLOCK

It is only after the 10th century in Byzantium that a new concept of Church singing and composition emerges, characterized by what Dimitri Conomos, in his essay “Changes in Early Christian and Byzantine Liturgical Chant,” describes as an “evolving freedom from the use of standard, traditional material; free invention; technical virtuosity, and replacement of old material with new.” By the 14th century, this resulted in a new style of Church singing in Byzantium, called “kalophonic” – literally, “good or beautiful sounding.” In this new style of singing, the emphasis no longer focused on the “meaning” of the words, but rather on the “sound” of the music. The Church service, now in the hands of professional singers and well-trained choirs, became a place of musical performance and enjoyment. Similar results occurred in Russia in the mid-17th and 18th centuries. The choir, not only in cathedral and large city churches, but even in small, village churches, actually became a substitute for “all the people,” to the point that nothing at all was sung by the congregation.

The very few exceptions were in the churches of the Carpathian region. Among the Galicians, Volhynians, and Ruthenians, the practice of fully congregational participation was still evident in Orthodox churches at the beginning of the 20th century. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Johann von Gardner, the eminent scholar of Russian neumatic chant, lived in this area for four years. He describes his encounter with this form of singing.

“In Subcarpathian Rus, in all the villages both among the *uniates* and also among the Orthodox, there was always practiced only congregational singing of the complete services, not excluding the changeable [proper] hymns in all the varied chants,” von Gardner writes. “They sang according to the *Great Zbornik* [a collection of prayers and liturgical texts] containing every necessary text. The numerous chants (not excluding all the *podobny*, not even found in the Synodal notated liturgical books) were known by everyone, even the children of school age. The leader of song – the most experienced singer from the parishes – standing at the *kliros* sang



In a growing number of parishes the congregation is encouraged to the liturgical responses with the choir.

Music in our worship

Part 3/ The evolution of new concepts

the chant, and the entire church sang all the *stichiry*, all the *tropars*, all the *irmosy* – in a word, everyone sang properly according to the established canonical parts of the Liturgy. They sang in unison and whoever could, imitated or reinforced the bass. The impression proved to be overwhelmingly strong.”

The call for the restoration of congregational singing. The question of “Church singing with the participation of all the people” was one of the issues raised by bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1905, when they were asked to submit reports in preparation for a Great Council of the Russian Church.

In his report, Bishop Constantine of Samara wrote, “We must restore singing to that state which it should and formerly did have. It is necessary to renew in the minds of the people the notion that congregational singing is the norm, and that choral singing is only a substitution for this.”

Bishop Evlogii of Kholm, who from 1922 to 1946 was Metropolitan of Western Europe, writing in support of congregational singing, suggested that this be “gradually introduced, beginning with the litanies and short hymns and then eventually including all the hymns of the Liturgy and the All-Night Vigil.”

The restoration of congregational singing was not simply based on a desire to

institute reform in order to comply with a canonical standard or an historical precedent; rather, it was seen as a measure to assist in giving to Liturgy the life, the joy, and the power inherent in its purpose, content, form, and message.

“Generally, one can no longer overlook ‘the concern for lifting up the grandeur and majesty of the Church services to the necessary and rightfully sacred heights, so that each believing Christian could, in fact, find joy and consolation in the Church, and not feel bored and fatigued,’” reads a report from the time from Shenskursk Province in the Archangel Diocese. “Choral – or even better, congregational – singing and comprehensible chanting will play an important role in developing this.”

The question of congregational participation and the availability of suitable music are issues being raised in our churches today by both clergy and lay people. With a few isolated exceptions, however, very little thought – and even less direction – has been given to these issues. As mentioned above, some 100 years ago bishops raised, discussed, and even offered suggestions for the implementation of a program to restore congregational singing. They viewed this as a necessity in order to bring life and vitality to the liturgical worship at that time.

RESOURCES

Visit the liturgical music chatroom

Interested in discussing music, hymnology, vocal techniques, rubrics and more with others? Log on to the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations' **liturgical music chat room** on the **first and third Tuesdays of every month at 8:30 p.m. EST.**

David Drillock, department chair, moderates the discussion.

Enter the chat room at www.oca.org/MDchat.asp?SID=13. ■

Music from 19

New concepts

In North America today, so many of our churches, including both the traditional, "well-established" parishes with strong ethnic ties and the newer, multicultural, "pan-Orthodox" communities, comprised of Orthodox Christians with little or no ties to ethnic traditions, are striving to maintain a spiritual and good liturgical life. More and more, the leaders of these parishes are recognizing that in order to do this, the music used in worship must be singable, liturgically appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing.

One of the great fears felt by many choir directors, composers, and serious singers of Church music is that in our haste to solve these problems, and especially that of the participation of the faithful in liturgical singing, the use of greatly inferior music in Orthodox worship will be the ultimate result. An adequate approach cannot be reduced solely to the question of "participation" or to the question of "musical style," but rather must be grounded in a true understanding of the purpose, content, and expression of the Liturgy itself – the manifestation of the beauty and joy of God's Kingdom. This indeed presents a challenge, not only to our Church composers, but to our translators and poets, our liturgists, our pastors, and to all those who sing. ■

David Drillock, *former provost and professor of liturgical music at St. Vladimir's Seminary, chairs the OCA Department of Liturgical Music and Translations.*

Christian Education

Please don't wish me a "Happy Easter"

VALERIE ZAHIRSKY

In a parish I knew quite well, one sad moment always dampened the warmth of Holy Pascha: it was the moment when I would say "Christ is risen" to certain parishioners, and would hear in reply, "Happy Easter." Sometimes it would come when they greeted me first with "Happy Easter."

It seems no coincidence that the children and grandchildren of those parishioners were largely alienated from the Church. They were ignorant of the Orthodox faith and Tradition, yet certain that they already knew it as well as they would ever want to.

Can a small matter like not saying "Christ is risen" – or not answering with an affirmative "Indeed He is risen" – really mean so much? I think it can, because in fact it's not a small matter at all! If "Christ is risen," then everything in life has changed. We can live forever and not be conquered by death. We can see suffering as meaningful, not random and purposeless. We can rejoice in the knowledge that Someone loved us enough to give His life for us and make death howl in anger.

To say "Christ is risen" and to answer "Yes, indeed" is to do what we are used to doing – sharing good news. We put "It's a Girl" signs on our front lawns when a daughter is born, or pass around blue-wrapped cigars for a newborn son. We announce graduations, promotions, engagements, and marriages to the world at large. Why do some of us hesitate to share the *best* news there will ever be – that *Christ truly, indeed, is risen?*

As teachers and parents, we can do some things to help our young people understand the meaning of the Orthodox paschal greeting. First, of course, we can share it with them and let them hear us sharing it with others. (We enticed the kids in the aforementioned parish with an egg hunt, which they enjoyed as most kids do. But many of them responded to "Christ is

Risen" with a blank stare, many barely familiar with the words, let alone the traditional reply.)

Here are some other suggestions for teachers and parents to strengthen children's understanding and experience of the central truth of the Orthodox Christian faith.

✓ Read Old Testament prophecies with young people. There are over one dozen readings chanted during the Vespers of Great and Holy Saturday. Encourage children to attend this service and listen for certain passages, or talk about them together.

✓ Prepare young people to take notice of certain things in the Paschal services: the changing of the colors to Paschal white, the hushed anticipation before the first proclamation of "Christ is risen," the reading of the Gospel in several languages, for example.

✓ Encourage memorization of portions of the Paschal hymns or prayers. Lines from St. John Chrysostom's Paschal sermon, called up from memory, could carry a person through some dark times in later years.

✓ Share some of the secular literature that reflects the central place that Pascha and the Resurrection have had in people's daily lives. Anton Chekhov's stories "The Student" and "Easter Eve" are two examples.

✓ Be an example in your own life! Let your own anticipation of Pascha – and your joy when it comes – be clearly seen in your actions and speech. The example of an adult who firmly believes and desires to share the good news of Our Lord's Resurrection is a gift to our youth, one that ultimately leads them to the eternal Kingdom. ■

Valerie Zahirsky, *a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary, is a member of the OCA Department of Christian Education. Her husband, Fr. Michael, serves SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Bellaire, OH and SS. Peter and Paul Church, Moundsville, WV.*

Christian Witness & Service

A work in progress

New *Resource Handbook* installment released

DONNA KARABIN

After 23 years and over 250 articles on virtually every aspect of individual and parish ministry, one might assume that the Orthodox Church in America's *Resource Handbook for Lay Ministries* was complete.

Not so. The latest installment offers nine articles on serving others in need.

Giving to others spiritually and materially. Two articles – "Parish Charitable Giving" by the Rev. Sam Kedala, and "The Martha Fund" by the Rev. Vladimir Aleandro and Deacon John Zarras – describe how two former missions embraced charitable giving as a permanent aspect of their financial stewardship.

Two other articles address the need to provide financial assistance to married seminarians. The Very Rev. David Mahaffey, in "Why Adopt a Seminarian," relates his own mid-life career change that brought him, his wife, and their four children to Saint Tikhon's Seminary. He describes how he and his parishioners at Saint Michael Church, Old Forge, PA, offer financial assistance to other seminarians with families.

In a related article, Allison Steffaro, who coordinates the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America's "Adopt a Seminarian" program, describes efforts to provide annual financial assistance to the neediest seminarian families and to distribute Christmas gifts to seminarians' children, made possible through the generous contributions made by FOCA chapters and districts and many parishes.

In a final article on giving, "Prayer Partners: A Lenten Outreach Program," Karen Mravetz, Church school coordinator at Holy Trinity Church, Parma, OH, describes how the parish's adults and children select other parishioners to pray for during Great Lent. On Pascha night, participants receive the added joy of discovering their prayer partners' identities.

Prison ministry. Dennis Dunn, the OCA's representative to the newly es-

For over two decades, the OCA's *Resource Handbook* was mailed to all parishes. The current and future issues, as well as past editions from the last two decades, are only available on-line at www.oca.org.

tablished Orthodox Prison Ministry, invites parishes to reach out to inmates during their incarceration and/or after their release in "Reaching Out: Prison Ministry in the Parish." Citing Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 – "I was in prison and you came to Me" – he describes ways parishioners can make a difference in the lives of inmates and their families.

Bookstore ministry. Holy Apostles parish, Columbia, SC, witnesses to the faith through its "Philokalia Ortho-

dox Bookstore." Librarian Patricia Madden speaks of its formation and organization and shares ideas and experiences after five years of growth.

Help for caregivers. Caregiving for an elderly parent or a loved one is a growing phenomenon. Noting this trend in her own parish, Diana Pasca, herself a caregiver, describes how she helped form a support group at Holy Cross Church, Medford, NJ, and shares insights into the group's monthly gatherings to offer mutual encouragement and support.

Resources and prayers. A final article addresses the last stages of life – sickness, dying, death, and burial. The Saint Elizabeth Committee of Saint Nicholas Church, Portland, OR, compiled a manual of resources and prayers to help those entering the end stages of life and those who minister to them. This manual is reviewed by the Very Rev. John Shimchick, pastor of Holy Cross Church, Medford, NJ, and editor of *Jacob's Well*, the official publication of the Diocese of Washington and New York. ■

Donna Karabin chairs the OCA Department of Christian Witness and Service.

Sharing the faith through bookstore ministry

Fr. Thomas Moore, rector of Holy Apostles parish, Columbia, SC, welcomes visitors to the Philokalia Bookstore, one of the community's outreach ministries. The bookstore is highlighted in the latest edition of the *Resource Handbook*. For an account of a similar ministry in Lincoln, NB, see page 23.



Evangelization

"Come and see!"

Personal discipleship is the key to Orthodox Christian evangelism

FATHER DANIEL KOVALAK

Many religious surveys have revealed that a vast majority of those now active in a church attribute their involvement to *personal contact* with a friend or family member, and that a majority of those considered "unchurched" would consider church involvement *if* someone invited and/or encouraged them to do so.

This being the case, it's obvious that personal contact is, by far, the most effective key to evangelism – joyfully living and sharing the Good News of Our Lord and Savior Jesus.

You've probably seen or heard the following statements repeatedly in your parish: "Invite someone to church." "Visitors welcome." "Bring a friend." But perhaps you've wondered, "Why me?" or "Whom should I invite?" or "How do I go about it?"

To assist you in answering these questions, here are nine helpful hints to consider.

Personal commitment. The question Our Lord posed to the apostle Peter is one we must personally answer: "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" [Matthew 16:15-16]. To be a disciple of Christ means to weave Jesus Christ into the very fabric of our daily lives. He cannot be "The Son of the Living God" only on Sundays!

In preparation for inviting others to come to your church, ask yourself questions that they are likely to ask of you: "What difference does Jesus Christ and Orthodox Christianity make in your life?" "What does your Church really believe and teach?" "What makes your Church any different from all the others?"

Would you offer someone a nicely-wrapped gift without knowing what was in it? In the same way, we need to know the

faith we desire to share. Our personal commitment to share our faith comes from our personal experience, expressed so well by Saint John the Evangelist: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" [1 John 3:3].

Pray. Convinced of your call to personal discipleship, begin, as in everything, with prayer, asking God for the courage and wisdom necessary to share your faith. Every daily encounter has "faith-sharing potential," and God will equip you for the task if you ask Him. Pray that you will be prepared to accept humbly and respond worthily to the many opportunities to share your faith in whatever situations and circumstances God places you in, by His divine providence.

Be confident. Know that in inviting others to come to

your church, you are helping to do the work of Christ. He is the One Who teaches us by word and deed to love others and invite them to "come and see" the richness and glory of His Kingdom. As Orthodox Christians, we have been commissioned by God, not only to live as His faithful servants, but also to "teach all nations." We must be as convinced of our personal responsibility to accomplish the Great Commission [Matthew 28:18-20] as were the apostles. Revisit the Acts of the Apostles to see the bold confidence of those who first accepted the Great Commission – and strive to imitate it!

Be urgent. Especially when you see others facing extraordinarily trying times, requiring God's

help the most, your invitation can assist them in coping with their circumstances with the grace of God and the fellowship of His Church. Don't delay! You may be reluctant or hesitant to invite others to church when they're going through difficult times or appear to already "have enough on their plates." But what *better* time for them to be introduced to the Good Shepherd and the Great Physician of souls and bodies within a community of faith?!

Be persistent. If a person says "no" to your first invitation, be patient – wait a while, then ask again! Don't be discouraged by a single negative response. It may not be until the third, sixth, or tenth invitation that they'll finally say, "Okay, I'll be there on Sunday." Your persistence is another indication

How does your parish rate?

A reporter recently visited 18 different churches on successive Sundays to find out what each community was really like. In every instance, he dressed neatly and stood near the front. After services, he walked slowly to the rear of the church, then returned to the front, and then went back to the foyer, using another aisle. He smiled at everyone and asked others for directions to specific places – the parish hall, the office, the rest rooms, etc. He remained for coffee, if served.

Using the following scale, the reporter awarded points to each community on the following basis:

- ✓ **10 points** for a smile from a worshipper.
- ✓ **10 points** for a greeting from someone nearby.
- ✓ **100 points** for an exchange of names.
- ✓ **200 points** for an invitation to have coffee.
- ✓ **300 points** for an invitation to return.
- ✓ **1,000 points** for an introduction to another worshipper.
- ✓ **2,000 points** for an invitation to meet the pastor.

The reporter discovered that, using this scale, 11 of the 18 churches visited earned *less than 100 points!* Five actually received *less than 20 points!* The conclusion: The doctrine may be sound, the singing inspirational, and the sermon uplifting – *but*, when a visitor finds nobody who cares whether he or she is there, he or she is *not* likely to return!

of your love, faith, and personal conviction that what you're inviting them to is truly significant and potentially life-changing!

Be accommodating. Make your "visitor" your "guest!" People often feel uncomfortable going into any new setting. Whether your parish has 50 or 500 people, it can be intimidating to a first-timer. When someone (finally!) accepts your invitation, give them encouragement and moral support. Assure them, "I'll meet you there (at the front door or in the parking lot) and we'll stand together during the service." Better yet, offer to pick them up and bring them yourself!

In any case, be sure to brief your guests on what they can expect with regard to the length of the service, singing, the coffee hour, etc. If they'll be coming to a Divine Liturgy, make sure they know that, while everyone is welcome to attend, only Orthodox Christians may partake of the Eucharist. This is important to avoid any possible embarrassment.

Afterwards, ask for your guests to share their impressions, respond to their questions, personally escort them to the fellowship hour, point them to some reading material, and introduce them to other parishioners and your priest. Have them sign a guest book or complete a visitor card so that they can be in-

Evangelization to 24

MISSION possible!

23

"Care for some literature with your latte?"

LINCOLN, NE – At first glance, the Catacomb Bookstore and Coffeehouse here seems a bit eclectic, with icons and crosses filling the walls, a huge selection of Orthodox Christian books and literature lining shelves, and a menu that features a full line of coffees, lattes, espresso, Italian sodas, bagel sandwiches, and other goodies.

But for the Rev. James Dank and the members of Saint John of Kronstadt Mission, the bookstore/coffeehouse combo is one of a number of innovative outreach ministries designed to introduce the residents of Lincoln to the Orthodox Christian faith.

"In the fall of 2004, a parishioner's father offered use of office space in an up-and-coming neighborhood to start a bookstore/coffeehouse as an outreach ministry," Father James explained. "After our parish council approved the idea, we were in business – providing a meeting place for those seeking the Truth, where our parishioners could share their faith in a unique missionary setting."

Father James, an avid guitarist, and two friends provided live music at the bookstore's February 2005 opening. "Remarkably, over 150 people from all walks of life visited on 'opening night,'" Father James related.

Many new people have embraced Orthodox Christianity after making initial contact at the bookstore, which Father James added "continues to be a meeting place for young and old alike."

"We've held a successful lecture series in the fall and spring, and our music nights have become quite popular with the public," he said. "My friends and I on occasion perform Gospel and traditional folk music, but we've also had special musical events, including a performance by singers from Saint George Antiochian Church, Kearny, NB."

"By the grace of God, our bookstore/coffeehouse ministry has become one of our mission parish's primary evangelistic efforts as we seek to proclaim the fullness of truth here," Father James added.

Saint John of Kronstadt Mission is one of five new communities receiving Church Planting grants made available through donations to the OCA's annual mission appeal. ■

The Catacombs – Nebraska style!

Fr. James Dank [below, left] and another musician prepare to entertain patrons with Gospel and folk songs at the Catacomb Bookstore and Coffeehouse, while parishioners answer questions on Orthodox Christianity [right].



"Come and see!"

cluded on the parish mailing list.

Be discerning. A first-time visit to an Orthodox service can be an overwhelming experience. The sights and sounds – and smell! – of Orthodox worship are so “different” that some will get caught up in the externals. Though a “special” Church celebration may seem an appropriate occasion to extend an invitation, it may actually be *too* overwhelming. (The Paschal midnight service is a good example!) Many find it useful to make an initial invitation to Vespers, to allow first-timers – timers to “get their feet wet” in our worship. Be discerning as to which service you extend an invitation.

Another option is to arrange for a personal, accompanied visit to the church *before* inviting someone to a service. This way, they’ll be familiar with the surroundings when they return to see the church “in action.” And don’t underestimate the ability and “power” of your church’s physical structure – its iconography, architecture, etc. – to “speak” to a visitor. As soon as they walk in the doors, they’ll know it’s not an “all-purpose” building!

Be thankful. Thank God for giving you the opportunity, courage, and wisdom to share your faith. And sincerely thank those who accepted your invitation[s] for doing so. Give them a follow-up call and/or drop them a note to express your thanks. At the same time, use your expression of thanks to *renew* your invitation: “Now, how about *this* Sunday?!”

Be hospitable. When you see fellow parishioners coming to services accompanied by guests, extend your hand of friendship and personal welcome. In some cases, it has taken a great deal of courage for them to enter the new and strange environment of an Orthodox church. A warm smile and handshake from others in the community says “we truly appreciate your presence, commend your courage, and are anxious to have you return!” ■

Fr. Dan Kovalak is rector of Holy Cross Church, Williamsport, PA; a member of the faculty of St. Tikhon’s Seminary; and a member of the OCA Department of Evangelization.

BECOME what you are!

Discovering our true identity

“**B**ecome what you are,” wrote Saint Gregory of Sinai in the 14th century. “Find Him Who is already yours. Listen to Him, Who never ceases speaking to you. Own Him Who already owns you.”

When it comes to your identity, whom do you believe? Do you believe your peers, your classmates, “society?” Do you believe your parents, your teachers, your elders? Do you believe what you say about yourself? What if none of these, including yourself, were correct? What if none of us truly knew who we were? What if the only person Who knew was God?

You have heard that one of the most important things in life is faith. Sometimes we think of faith as something very formal – the Creed, a set of ideas we’re supposed to accept if we’re going to consider ourselves “Christian.” These are *expressions of faith*, but not the faith itself. What we believe in our innermost being, what we believe not only about God but about ourselves, is what defines our faith. What we believe about God and ourselves also determines how we live, what kinds of choices we make, and in the end, who we become.

What if, instead of believing that God is like so many people in the world whom we have to impress, entertain, flatter, and compromise in order to gain their attention or earn their respect, we realized that God already loves us and desires us more than we could ever possibly know or appreciate? What if, when we hear the words “For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son” [John 3:16], we realize that these words mean “God so loved *me*?” What if the only thing holding us back from knowing, experiencing, and sharing this love was our own ignorance, or stubbornness, or lack of faith? What if having faith was really as easy as “Find Him Who is already yours” and “Own Him Who already owns you?” as Saint Gregory reminds us?

When we hear the words, “Become what you are,” we are being called to discover faith not only from the depths of our own hearts, but from God’s wisdom as well – which can only be approached from within. The Lord said “The Kingdom of God is within you” [Luke 17:21] to those looking outside themselves for the wisdom of God. Only by going within and coming to terms with the truth of who we are, which only God can fully reveal to us, can we come to know Him as well. Does this sound amazing? Does this sound suspicious? Do you feel fear that the ultimate Truth of who you are and who God is might be closer than you ever imagined? Do you doubt it? Do you believe?

In essence, the task before us is to know the Truth, so that the Truth will set us free [John 8:31-32]. This is also this year’s theme for the youth of our Church, though truth be told, it could be the lesson of our lives, no matter what our age. ■

food for thought...

- 1 What do I really believe about God and His relationship to me? How does that belief affect my everyday decisions? My ability to say no to temptation?
- 2 What do I believe about myself? How did I get that idea? Do I really believe that God “thinks and feels” the same way? Why or why not?
- 3 In order to become the best Christian I can be, what beliefs about myself and God do I need to challenge, change, or reject? How can I begin making the changes I need to make?

Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry

Getting to know you!

Back-to-school retreats help break the ice

With parish teens often living at a distance from their peers, the need to get to know one another can easily be addressed by holding a back-to-school retreat or lock-in in September.

While a back-to-school retreat could be held at a retreat or conference center or camp, the parish hall or basement offers a low or no-cost alternative. Once the site has been determined, there are a number of things that will need to be taken care of during the planning process.

Timing. After asking the blessing of your priest to hold the retreat, select a date that is best for the greatest number of teens. Avoid Labor Day weekend and homecomings. You might want to begin the event with dinner on Friday evening, ending with Saturday evening Vespers or Vigil, or you could begin on Saturday morning and conclude with the Sunday Liturgy.

Theme and activities. Discuss possible themes with your priest, who will be happy to listen to your ideas and share a few of his own. Activities should revolve around the theme. In addition to services and discussions, the program should include ample time for participants to get to know one another. Simple meals can be prepared by participants or adults helpers. Be sure to have a suitable number of adults willing to spend the night as chaperones.

Getting the word out. Start announcing the retreat at least one month in advance. Consider calling less active youth to extend an invitation. You might also want to invite teens from neighboring parishes to participate.

You'll find a wealth of retreat ideas at <http://yya.o.ca.org/TheHub/Retreats/index.htm> on the OCA web site. ■



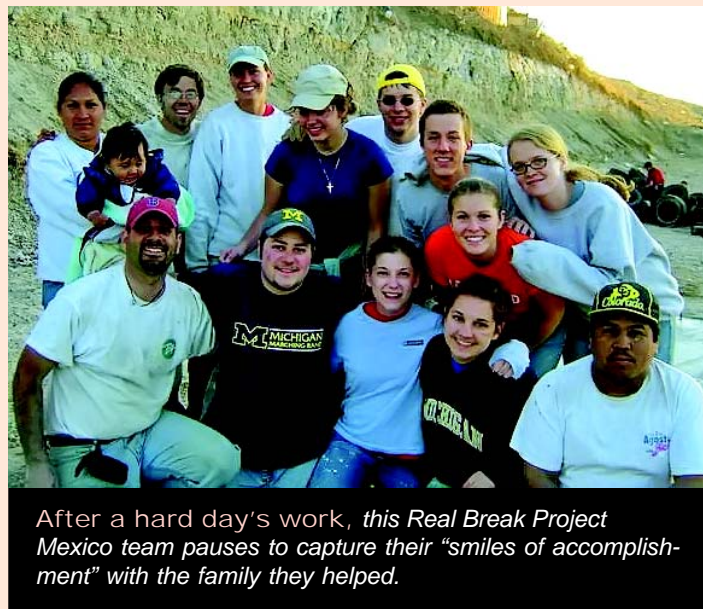
Teens from St. Mary Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN, brave -20 degree temps at a winter break lock-in.

101 college students reach out during OCF Real Break

The Orthodox Christian Fellowship's "Real Break" program reached a significant milestone: in seven years, over 500 students have participated in the experience.

In late February and March 2006, 101 college students, participating in nine different trips, actively engaged in this life-changing experience. This brought the seven-year Real Break total to 518 students who have chosen this ministry as an alternative to the traditional Spring Break.

Besides three groups of students who traveled to Project Mexico in Tijuana, other work sites included Hogar Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Guatemala, Rafael House in San Francisco, CA, the Monastery of the Twelve Apostles in



After a hard day's work, this Real Break Project Mexico team pauses to capture their "smiles of accomplishment" with the family they helped.

Greece, and an orphanage in San Salvador. Real Break participants also joined thousands of other college students in Louisiana's Gulf Coast through a Hurricane Relief project, where they helped restore New Orleans' Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church.

Rachel Cattell, a junior at Penn State University, was one of a group of students who traveled to Rafael House, a shelter for children and families. Adding to this year's experience was an extended visit by His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley.

"The whole week was amazing," Rachel Cattell offered. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience to be able to spend so much

Real Break to 29

Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry

*From coast to coast, there's an OCA summer camp near you!
Sign up now for an experience you'll never forget!*

OCA 2006 CAMP DIRECTORY

REGION	CAMP	DATES	CONTACT
ALASKA	St. Innocent Camp, Chugiak, AK	TBA	Fr. Isidore; frisdore@gci.net
	St. Juvenaly Camp, Newhalen, AK	August 11-15	Fr. David Askoak; 907/571-1209
	SS. Vladimir and Yakov Camp, Pilot Station, AK	July 26-28	Fr. Stephan Heckman; 907/549-3827
	Elevation of the Holy Cross Parish Camp, Russian Mission, AK	July 25-27	Fr. Peter Askoar; 907/584-5135
CANADA	Camp St. Nicholas, Ft. Qu-Appelle, SK	July 9-15	Fr. Daniel Nenson; 306/761-2379 Dn. Michael Ungrin; 204/661-3978
	Can-Am Camp, Ft. Qu-Appelle, SK	July 23-29	Fr. Rodion Luciuk; 306/782-2482
	St. Peter the Aleut Camp, Alberta	August 3-9	Fr. Larry Reinheimer; 403/938-4929 Christy Oswald; chignell@yahoo.com
	St. Arseny Camp, British Columbia	July 3-9	Fr. John Hainsworth; 250/384-7727
NORTHEAST	New England Youth Rally, Contoocook, NH	August 14-19	Fr. John Hopko; 860/582-3631
	St. Andrew Camp, Jewell, NY	July 2-Aug. 12/ <i>Ages 7-13</i> Aug. 13-19/ <i>Teens</i>	Daria York; 315/675-9771; 329-8588 Web site: www.standrewscamp.com
	St. Tikhon Camp, South Canaan, PA	July 9-15	Martin Paluch; 570/937-4686
	Holy Assumption Day Camp, Clifton, NJ	TBA	Fr. Stephen Evanina; 973/473-0076
MIDWEST	Camp Vatra, Grass Lake, MI	July 9-22/ <i>Seniors</i> July 30-Aug. 13/ <i>Juniors</i>	Fr. Ian Pac-Urar; 330/666-8054 Mary Ellen Rosco; 313/562-1521
	Chicago Deanery Camp, E. Troy, WI	June 19-23	Fr. Thomas Mueller; 414/671-5819
	E.O Youth Camp, Kansas City, KS	July 30-August 5	Nicholas Platko; 785/979-6333
	St. Vladimir Camp, Farmdale, OH	July 2-8/ <i>Ages 7-11</i> July 9-15/ <i>Ages 12-15</i>	Lori Kochan; 330/877-3379
	Nat'l. FOCA Jr. Sports Tournament, St. Vladimir Camp, Farmdale, OH	July 16-22	Fr. Emilian Hutnyan; 216/662-1313 Nat'l. FOCA Office; 570/825-3158
	St. Mary Camp, McGregor, MN	June 18-24	Ron Tucci; 612/599-1125; 781-7667
	St. John Camp, Riverdale, IN	July 30-August 4	Luke Beecham; 317/635-7596; 460-8574
SOUTH	St. Innocent Camp, St. Simon's Island, GA	TBA	Valerie or Don Gregory; 813/907-0725
	St. Peter the Aleut Camp, Ft. Worth, TX	June 5-9	Fr. John Anderson; 214/528-3741 Michael Smith; 214/542-7711
	St. Seraphim Boys' Camp and St. Sophia Young Women's Retreat, Conyers, GA	TBA	Cecelia and Robert Roden; 770/761-7013
WEST	Camp Angelos, Portland, OR	August 13-18	Ellen Belesiu; 503/639-6464
	Rocky Mountain Camp, Glacier View Ranch, CO	August 6-9	Fr. Anthony Karbo; 719/473-9238
	St. Eugene Camp, Northern CA	July 2-8	Kathy Pieracci; 209/931-0584
	St. Paul Camp, Pacific SW Deanery, Mt. Charleston, NV	August 15-18	Fr. Eric Tosi; 702/898-4800

WorldBriefs

FYROM

Archbishop Jovan released from prison

By decision of the Supreme Court of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [FYROM], His Eminence, Archbishop Jovan of Ochrid and Skopje, the head of the Autonomous Orthodox Archdiocese of Ochrid, was released on March 4, 2006 after spending 220 days in a Skopje prison.

Archbishop Jovan, in the capacity of Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje and Exarch of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate for the Archdiocese of Ochrid, was sentenced to 18 months in prison in August 2004 for "causing and spreading racial, religious and national hatred and divisions."

The sentence was upheld in mid-2005 after the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church declared the autonomy of the Archdiocese of Ochrid and appointed him Archbishop. FYROM's government claimed that the Archbishop's arrest and sentencing were unrelated to the decades of dispute between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian Orthodox Church, whose canonicity has not been recognized by the Orthodox world since it unilaterally proclaimed itself independent from the Serbian Patriarchate in the 1960s.

Archbishop Jovan began his prison term on July 26, 2005. His 18-month sentence had been extended by one year for violating a suspended sentence for "self-will and violence" because of the attempt to baptize his sister's grandchild.

Following an appeal for a reduction of his prison term, the Supreme Court reduced the sentence from 18 to eight months, the amount of time Archbishop Jovan already had spent in prison. Archbishop Jovan's imprisonment provoked protests by the government in Belgrade, the Serbian Orthodox Church and other local Orthodox churches. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, wrote a letter of support on the Archbishop's behalf upon learning of his incarceration. ■ Source: KIM

CZECH REPUBLIC & SLOVAKIA

Metropolitan Nikolaj of Czech Lands, Slovakia dies

His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada, represented His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman and the Orthodox Church in America at the funeral of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Nikolaj, Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, on February 4, 2006.

Metropolitan Nikolaj, 78, fell asleep in the Lord on January 30.

Upon learning of Metropolitan Nikolaj's repose, Metropolitan Herman sent his condolences to the Holy Synod of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Presiding at the funeral at Presov's Saint Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was His Eminence, Archbishop Kristof of Prague and the Czech Republic.

In addition to the Orthodox Church in America, other autocephalous and autonomous Churches represented at the funeral included those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Poland, Greece, and Ukraine. Also in attendance were Slovak President Jan Gasparovic and a number of other state figures. Representatives of the Lutheran, Greek Catholic, and other faith communities also were present.

According to the Very Rev. Dr. Stefan Sak, the Church's secretary for foreign affairs, "His Beatitude served the Church faithfully, and all the members of the Church feel pain in his departure, which left the Church without its highest pastor."

Born at Hanigovce, Slovakia on Decem-

ber 19, 1927, Metropolitan Nikolaj was ordained to the priesthood in 1950. He studied at the Moscow Theological Academy from 1955 to 1959. Appointed Bishop of

Presov in 1965, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop in 1988.

Metropolitan Nikolaj was elected Primate on April 17, 2000, after the death of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Dorotheus, who had led the Church for 35 years. Unlike his predecessor, he bore the title of Archbishop of Presov, a major

city in Slovakia with a traditionally substantial Orthodox Christian population, rather than Archbishop of Prague, capital of the Czech Republic.

After the fall of communism, the former Czechoslovakia was divided into two separate countries, creating an unprecedented situation for the Church. Two administrative centers were established in Prague and Presov to oversee the Church's two Czech and two Slovak dioceses.

The Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which traces its roots back to the efforts of the 10th-century Byzantine missionary brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, was granted autocephalous status by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1951. In 1998, the Church's autocephaly was recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople during the visit of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Czech and Slovak Republics. ■ Source: OCA



Metropolitan Nikolaj [left] hosted Metropolitan Herman on official visit to the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in 2004.

NorthAmerica

"Disturbing observations"

SCOBA hierarchs issue sober warning to parents of dangers of internet porn

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, was among the members of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas to sign a letter, dated March 15, 2006, warning of the dangers of the internet's "explicit sexual content."

The text of the letter reads as follows.

"With this letter, we, the hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, wish to share with you some disturbing observations concerning the destruction of many lives in our nation, as explicit sexual content becomes increasingly available through a variety of technologies.

"We are writing at this time because we know that you care deeply about the well-being of your children, and it is precisely your children who may pay the highest price and become victims of the uncontrolled availability of all that is now technologically available on the internet. This could spell disaster for your children and grandchildren, inflicting upon their lives and their families grave consequences resulting in immeasurable moral, social and spiritual damage.

"Current advanced technology facilitates the distribution of digital video content via wireless handheld devices such as video cell phones, iPods and PDAs. Through highly advanced versions of these wireless handheld devices, all the pornography on the internet is available to many Americans, including our children and teens. There are no filtering or monitoring devices available at this time. This means many children and teens will be able to access such material, unless their parents are aware of this threat and take action to prevent it.

"The technology itself is not dangerous. The danger lies in the fact that there are currently no safeguards or regulations in place to protect children and teens from

being exposed to unwanted, seductive and explicit content that is downloadable through these wireless handheld devices.

"The National Coalition and the Religious Alliance Against Pornography,

[RAAP], which has been fighting the advancement of our sexualized culture since 1986, when it was formed in New York with Archbishop Iakovos among its founders, are now working with the CTIA Wireless Association to ensure that appropriate guidelines, controls and protections from this threat are in place as it relates to cell phones.

"However, it is critically important that companies develop educational materials for parents, which will be used consistently at the point of purchase and choice of contract. Until these wireless devices can be used safely, we urge great caution to par-

Orthodox reach out to African-Americans

Several noted Orthodox Christian clergy and lay speakers will highlight Africa's ancient Christian heritage at two conferences in June 2006.

"Rediscovering our African Christian Heritage" is the theme of the Ancient Christianity Conference in Newark, NJ June 2-3, 2006. The program will introduce the general public to Orthodox Christianity with special emphasis on its 2000-year presence on the African continent, and the implications of this heritage today. Among the themes to be explored are Africa's ancient Christian heritage, the witness of African women in the life of Orthodox Christianity, and the history of the Church between the time of the apostles and the Protestant reformation.

Organized by the Very Rev. Joseph Lickwar, rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Jersey City, NJ, and the Rev. Brian D. Rawls, Sr., the conference will be held at the Deliverance Evangelistic

Center, 621 Clinton Ave., Newark, NJ.

Speakers include Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, the Rev. Moses Berry,

Dr. Albert Raboteau, Mother Catherine [Weston], and the Rev. Paisius Altschul.

For information contact Father Lickwar at 201/434-1986 or jlickwar@comcast.net, or Rev. Rawls at 973/332-2517 or antenicene@msn.net.

Saint Paul Retreat Center, 23333 Schoolcraft Rd., Detroit, MI will be the site of a similar conference, "Forgiveness: Bridging

Racial Barriers to Achieve Harmony in Christ," June 22-25, 2006.

Speakers include the Revs. Moses Berry, Jerome Sanderson, Paisius Altschul, Antonio Perdomo, and Michael Simerick; Mother Katherine Weston; Prof. Al Raboteau; and Photius Meirthew.

Further information is available at www.stmaryofegypt.net, by writing panteleimonmd@aol.com, or by calling 256-237-0251 or 256-239-7353. ■



Fr. Moses Berry of the Theotokos "Unexpected Joy" Mission, Ash Grove, MO, will share his experiences at both conferences.

NorthAmerica

ents of children and teens.

"We call upon you, our clergy, to be vigilant and to help keep your flock informed of the dangers they unknowingly are opening to their children and grandchildren when they give them these wireless devices, before appropriate protection has been developed. Ongoing parental guidance is essential to protect our children."

Other SCOBA hierarchs signing the letter were His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, SCOBA chairman; His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, SCOBA vice chairman; His Eminence, Metropolitan Christopher, Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada, SCOBA secretary; His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos, American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA, SCOBA treasurer; His Eminence, Archbishop Nicolae, Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada; His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph, Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church; His Eminence, Metropolitan Constantine, Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA ; and His Grace, Bishop Ilia of Philomelion, Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America. ■

Fr. Kishkovsky one of five leaders of new US unity group

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, ecumenical officer for the Orthodox Church in America, has been named one of five leaders of the broadest-ever Christian unity organization in America history, Christian Churches Together in the USA [CCT].

Thirty-four US Christian bodies formally inaugurated the new organization on March 31, 2006 after a three-day meeting outside Atlanta, while a public kickoff is scheduled for February 2007.

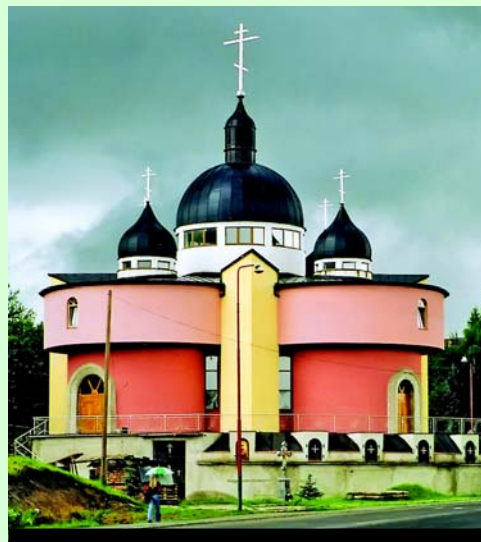
The looseknit group brings together five Christian "families" that have long been divided by historical and theological differences, including Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, historically black churches,

Minnesota faithful build Slovak church

Nestled in the rural hills of northeastern Slovakia lies the sleepy town of Bardejov, which traces its origins to the early 13th century. The hamlet's 1200 Orthodox Christians – many more live in the surrounding villages – for years peacefully shared a church with their Greek Catholic neighbors.

But after the Velvet Revolution, the Orthodox faithful were no longer permitted to use the church and were forced to find other quarters as the Slovak government gave most church properties to the dominant Catholic Church.

In 1991, Orthodox faithful procured



Bardejov, Slovakia's new church became a reality due to the generosity of faithful from the OCA's St. Mary Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN.

a piece of land, but with unemployment hovering at 25%, funds for construction were scarce, until faithful from Saint Mary Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN, raised sufficient funds to enable the Bardejov faithful to complete their church. [Many of the Minneapolis faithful trace their roots to Bardejov.]

According to project coordinator James Brinda, tens of thousands of dollars were collected by cathedral faithful during the 1990s to assist the construction effort. A group of cathedral faithful plan to be present in July 2006 for the new church's consecration. ■

and the Orthodox churches.

The effort to form "a more credible Christian witness" began almost five years ago. Organizers have met annually to try to dismantle decades of political, doctrinal, and historical animosity among US churches. Organizers had hoped to launch the organization last year but put off official action until they could attract more participation from black churches.

Eight additional churches and organizations attended the Atlanta meeting as first-time observers and could eventually join as members. Potential members include smaller conservative churches.

Organizers said that tackling poverty would be the group's first priority.

In 2005, the OCA Holy Synod of Bishops decided to participate in CCT's work.

Other CCT leaders include representatives from the National Baptist Convention USA, the United Methodist Church, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore is expected to represent Catholics on the leadership panel. ■

Real Break from 25

Students reach out

time with a bishop. Bishop Benjamin was washing dishes and working along with us. He showed us that he is a real person. In the process we were able to show that college students care and are willing to give up Spring Break to spread the love and life of Christ."

Mr. Joseph J. Samra III, OCF program director, has witnessed Real Break's growth through its seven years.

"The importance of Real Break is significant in the lives of so many young adults, especially at such a critical time in their life," he said. "Being able to offer our Orthodox students the possibility to participate in these short-term mission trips hopefully will keep them not only connected to the Church, but inspire them to devote always a part of or their lives to assisting those who are in such great need. Real Break has a major role in the landscape of the Orthodox Christian college student." ■

Communities

NJ faithful help PR mission

PASSAIC, NJ – Faithful from St. John the Baptist Church here recently donated \$1000.00 and a new Gospel book to St. Spyridon Mission, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Pictured below presenting the Gospel book to Fr. Andrej Vujisic, the mission's priest-in-charge, is Fr. Sophrony Royer, rector of St. John's.

Under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Central American Metropolitanate, the mission was established in 1996 and serves a growing number of Puerto Ricans, eastern Europeans, and Greeks. ■



Texas scouts receive awards

THE WOODLANDS, TX – Four members of St. Cyril of Jerusalem Church here received Orthodox scouting awards during an archpastoral visit by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South on February 26, 2006.

Pictured above [from left] are Stefan Nolet, Nina Lickwar, Julia Biberdorf, Archbishop Dmitri, Michael Carter, scoutmaster John Rankin, and Fr. Basil Biberdorf, rector. ■

Spirit from 5

Survival and triumph

herself after being rejected and abandoned by her lover: "I have all my life to live, all my love to give, I will survive." And we can only cheer her for her courage, applauding her strength of character. She will sweep up the broken pieces of her shattered plans and go on living, putting the anguishing episode behind her.

Philosophers would identify that attitude as *Stoicism* – mustering the means to overcome the instinct to flee or to withdraw from life and to go inward where one feels one cannot be hurt anymore. The tendency comes to all of us at one time or another, especially when our plans are shattered, our goals are crushed, and our self image is tattered. It's understandable, but it's not Christian.

When we look at the Cross and Our Lord upon it, when we kiss His Cross and thereby affirm our commitment to Him, we are making several significant points.

1. The worst has already happened; nothing more harmful to the world or to us is possible. What could be worse than to

have the loving Lord enter time and history with a plan to save us, and to be treated in such a way by those He felt would be best capable of understanding what the Holy Trinity was about?

2. Again, Saint Paul writes, "The Cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but to us who are saved, it is the power of God" [1 Corinthians 1:18].

3. I am more than a spectator; I am a player on the field of life, and Christ's victory through endurance gives me the courage and the means to share that triumph by taking up those crosses that come to me from time to time and bearing them bravely. ■

Death from 6

Death watch

certain: Our lives are not our own but rather, a gift from God – a sacred gift entrusted to us that must be used wisely, nurtured lovingly, and accepted thankfully, regardless of the difficulties we may encounter. As such, our life is not ours to take, any more than taking the life of an-

other is our prerogative.

There are some who would categorically claim that those who commit suicide are victims – victims of overwhelming odds, victims of a lousy upbringing, victims of abusive situations or addictions or any number of unfortunate circumstances. Indeed, such can be the case; regardless, it is precisely to lighten such burdens that Our Lord came into the world, proclaiming new life for all who would opt to change their hearts, minds, vision, and direction and accept the hope that He freely offers to everyone who desires it, despite their sins or odds or upbringing or addictions. In Him, there is no crisis, no problem too great to overcome; in Him, we are reminded that the things that overwhelm us today are often forgotten tomorrow, if only we focus on Him in faith, cling to Him in hope, and become one with Him in love.

In short, suicide solves nothing; rather, it prevents us from putting our problems behind us, with God's help, while delighting in the new life that He, and He alone, promises to all who turn their burdens and life's yoke over to Him. FJM

Communities

Eight Long Island scouts receive awards

EAST MEADOW, NY – Eight boys and girls from Holy Trinity Church here recently received awards from the Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting [EOCS].

"Our parish was very proud to have such a large contingent of award winners this year," said Fr. Alexander Garklavs, rector. "They worked on numerous projects, including gathering and personally delivering toys to children in the pediatric ward at Nassau University Medical Hospital, as part of the award program."



Pictured with Fr. Alexander and Mr. George Bouloukos, EOCS national chairman, are [from left] scouts Michael Cariello, Zacary Thomas, Thomas Kirk, Emily Thomas, Catherine Thomas, Alexander Eagen, Victoria Tiranno, and Peter Tiranno. ■



Miami parish rebuilds

MIAMI, FL – Faithful at SS. Peter and Paul Church here are still dealing with damage caused by last fall's Hurricane Wilma.

"We have quite an extensive list of damage to our church and house, and our pavilion [pictured above] was virtually destroyed," said Fr. Alexander Padlo. "Although the property is insured, our deductible is \$28,400.00 – almost equal to our small parish's annual budget!"

Assistance may be sent to SS. Peter and Paul Church, 1411 SW 11th St., Miami, FL 33135. ■

Fr. Fedec celebrates 40th anniversary

KENOSHA, WI – On Sunday, February 19, 2006, Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest presented a diocesan citation to Fr. Alexis W. Fedec, pastor emeritus of St. Nicholas Church here, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Fr. Alexis was ordained by the late Metropolitan Ireney in New York, NY on February 13, 1966. He served as rector of St. Nicholas Church from 1975 until his retirement in 2005. He continues to serve as treasurer of the Chicago Deanery.

Concelebrating the hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Job and Fr. Alexis were Fr. Stephen Hrycyniak, rector of St. Nicholas Church; Fr. Basil Aden, attached; Fr. Paul S. Fedec of Greenwood Village, CO, Fr. Alexis' brother; and Deacon George Potym of Milwaukee, WI.

A banquet was held in Fr. Alexis' honor at the Maplecrest Country Club in Kenosha later that afternoon. ■



Archbishop Job presents citation to Fr. Alexis Fedec on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

Fr. Zahirsky honored

BELLAIRE, OH – During a recent visit to SS. Cyril and Methodius Church here, Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western PA presented a jeweled pectoral cross to Fr. Michael Zahirsky in recognition of his three decades of ministry. Fr. Michael also serves the faithful at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Moundsville, WV. ■

Fr. Zahirsky kisses pectoral cross held by Archbishop Kyrill.



Communities

Send photos and news to TOC Communities, One Wheaton Center 912, Wheaton, IL 60187 or info@oca.org

Fire strikes All Saints Church, Olyphant, PA on eve of Great Lent

OLYPHANT, PA – On Sunday, March 5, 2006, the eve of the first day of Great Lent, flames shot out of All Saints Church here in a fire that caused an estimated \$750,000.00 in damage to the century-old structure.

Fire fighters were called to the church at 3:43 p.m. Fr. Paul Fetsko, rector, said he was driving toward the church about the same time.

"We were coming downhill, and I

saw the smoke and said, "That's our church," Fr. Fetsko told *Scranton Times-Tribune* reporters.

Fr. Fetsko rushed to save vestments and the sacred items in the altar while parishioners and fire fighters retrieved banners and other liturgical items.

Olyphant Fire Chief Bob Powell said flames also damaged the sacristy, but spared the parish office in a building behind the church.

Fr. Fetsko told reporters that some of the icons on the interior walls were peeling due to the hot temperatures. Flames, water, and smoke also damaged the altar, he said.

On Monday, March 6, a state police fire marshal announced that the fire had started accidentally.

Established in 1902, All Saints parish was due to host a deanery Lenten Vesper service on Sunday, April 9.

Fr. Fetsko said the parish would look for a temporary home, although he said services could be celebrated in the church basement.

Metropolitan Herman visited the parish within days of the fire to survey damage, while Bishop Tikhon of

*Faith and determination
Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia leads
All Saints' faithful in prayer after fire.
Parishioners are determined to
restore the century-old church to its
former glory.*



Standing in the altar of All Saints Church, Metropolitan Herman and Fr. Fetsko survey fire damage to the back of the iconostasis and altar walls. An exquisite mural of the Mother of God, a replica of one originally painted by renown artist Victor Vasnetsov in St. Vladimir Cathedral, Kyiv, Ukraine, suffered severe damage as flames reached the altar ceiling.

Philadelphia and Eastern PA, who also visited, celebrated a Service of Thanksgiving to bolster the faithfuls' determination to restore their temple to its former glory. ■