

Summer/Fall 2014

Jacob's well



*Thanksgiving, Salvation,
and Eternal Joy:
The Legacy of
Fr. Alexander Schmemmann
Thirty Years Later*

Jacob's Well

Summer/Fall 2014



*"Give me this water,
that I may not thirst . . ."*
John 4:15

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Thanksgiving, Salvation, and Eternal Joy

by Fr. John Shimchick

The life and ministry of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann changed Orthodoxy in America. But one could say that it has also never been the same since his death in 1983. For sure, parishes exist, the Eucharist is celebrated, frequent communion is common, liturgical studies continue — life goes on. If there is, nevertheless, still a sense of something or someone missing, perhaps it is the loss of a single leader who holds what Fr. Alexander witnessed to in his teachings, writings, sermons, and personality as “the ‘relatedness’ of all things to God in Christ by the Holy Spirit in the Church.”

What his students recall and readers across the world then and now still discover is how Fr. Alexander “held things together” as a theologian, pastor, Church leader, and human. He utilized as his resources the Church’s language in its Scriptures, its worship, its theology as expressed by the Fathers and other theologians, never afraid to recognize poets and authors as allies. He found it also in beauty and in his journeys through city streets. A worthwhile study would be the exploration of how his theological “method” relied so much on musical terminology such as: key, tonality, and rhythm. One of my favorite classes was, “The Church in Russian Literature,” where deeply considered and obviously loved and memorized texts poured out passionately from him. “You remember Pasternak’s poem on the harlot from tonight’s service?” he once said to me as we passed each other after the Holy Wednesday Bridegroom Matins Service (see, “Magdalene I & II” from “The Poems of Yurii Zhivago”).

In this issue we want to explore his continued legacy — 30 years after his death, maybe even introducing him to some for whom he is unfamiliar. Bishop Michael examines Fr. Alexander’s influence on him in three areas: 1) man as a worshipping being — “*homo adorans*”; 2) the renewal of the Eucharist; and 3) One Local Church. We are honored to have a reflection from his son, Serge, a renowned journalist and member of the Editorial Board of *The New York Times*, but also known to many for the early work of his student days as editor of *Concern* magazine, one of the finest theological publications in the history of Orthodoxy in America (many of its contributors have been significantly involved in Church life ever since). Fr. Alexis Vinogradov looks at the question of: “Who is Fr. Alexander?” We welcome the contribution of Fr. Paul Lazor whose friendship with Fr. Alexander ranged from Seminary student days in New York City to the

last moments of his life. There are also several guest reflections from: Fr. John Jillions, Dr. Albert Rossi, and Professor Paul Meyendorff — The Alexander Schmemmann Professor of Liturgical Theology at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. Finally, Fr. Thomas Hopko offers a selection of his favorite “remembered and rendered” quotes. These are located throughout the issue in the sidebars and other shaded text boxes.

In presenting Diocesan life we are pleased to acknowledge several parish anniversaries: 100 Years — SS. Peter and Paul Church, Endicott, NY; 50 Years — St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY and St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester, NY; 45 Years — Holy Apostles Church, Saddle Brook, NJ; and the restoration, renovation, and consecration of Holy Transfiguration Cathedral, Brooklyn, NY. It is exciting to observe the activity at Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY, outside of Ithaca, and events taking place at Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, NY St. Vladimir’s Church, Trenton, NJ, and the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ. In our “Special Features” section we continue to offer ways of ministering to Veterans and present an examination of how young people, according to certain studies, perceive their spiritual lives. Maureen Ahearn shares information and testimonials on the viability of the Orthodox Church in America’s Clergy Pension Plan. We sadly note the falling asleep in the Lord of Father John Bohush. As usual, we conclude with a reflection on our theme by Fr. Stephen Siniari.

For me, the “relatedness” of Fr. Alexander’s thought is expressed best in the first line of his last sermon, delivered on Thanksgiving Day, a few weeks before his death on December 13, 1983: “Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.” The images of “thanksgiving, salvation, and eternal joy” permeate everything he expressed and who he was. But I am drawn more and more to the word — “capable.” Who of us, if we really wanted it, might or could not be capable of desiring, of taking hold, of becoming Eucharistic people, redeemed by joy, and capable of salvation? All of us are capable — at least, this is our hope.

Our affirmation in this issue is that it is indeed possible to find within the legacy of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann the key to all that which is essential for our salvation and “for the life of the world.”

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*I believe
that every
person has
one powerful
conviction
that grounds
all of their
ideas and
actions, and
around which
all their
thoughts
and behavior
revolve.
Mine is the
“relatedness”
of all things to
God in Christ
by the Holy
Spirit in the
Church.*

*The Church
is not an
institution
with
sacraments;
it is a
Sacrament
with
institutions.
It is not an
organization
with
teachings;
it is a
Teaching with
organizations.*

Rekindling the Vision: A Reflection on Three Themes in the Writing of Father Alexander Schmemmann

by Bishop Michael

From the late 1960's until his untimely death in 1983 (years which spanned my own Seminary career and my first decade of service in the Priesthood), Father Alexander Schmemmann had a most profound effect on the Orthodox Church in our country – more so, in fact, than any other priest in America. He was, among many things, a brilliant theologian, the Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, a seasoned priest, a renowned liturgist, an inspiring preacher, and a remarkable visionary. It was to that last quality – the visionary – that I was attracted.

Father Alexander brought to life that passage in the Acts of the Apostles, where St. Peter, speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's Holy Church, quotes the Prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh...your young men shall see visions; your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:16–17). When I looked from the outside at what Father Schmemmann was preaching and teaching, and what so many in the newly-proclaimed Orthodox Church in America were doing to incarnate his words, I was convinced the Spirit was alive and well and guiding the new autocephalous Church in so many important ways.

As I write this editorial from the vantage of a Bishop in the OCA, recalling the glorious gift of Father Schmemmann to our Church, I bask in his Spirit-driven vision. But I wonder sometimes whether the Spirit burns so brightly in our churches today, as compared to thirty or forty years ago, when autocephaly was newly received and the vision of Father Alexander and his peers was so contagious. As we mark the 30th anniversary of his passing into eternity, I urge all of us to re-examine the life and writings of this incomparable protopresbyter and do justice to his memory by making his words come alive in our Church once again. This edition of *Jacob's Well* is dedicated to his memory, and this editorial is designed to revitalize three important matters close to his heart.

"Homo Adorans"

One of the great themes in Father Alexander's writings is man as "*homo adorans*" – a worshipping person. Not ignoring the virtues of charitable

works, he defined the human being in terms of his relationship with God through the Liturgy. In *For the Life of the World*, he writes:

In the Bible to bless God is not a "religious" or "cultic" act, but the very way of life...All rational, spiritual and other qualities of man, distinguishing him from other creatures, have their focus and ultimate fulfillment in this capacity to bless God, to know, so to speak, the meaning of the thirst and hunger that constitutes his life. "*Homo sapiens*," "*homo faber*"...yes, but first of all, "*homo adorans*."

The first and basic definition of man is that he is the priest. He stands at the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God...

At the time Father Schmemmann wrote this, our Church was vibrant with faithful who regularly filled their temples for Sundays and feast days. They sought to live out this theology on a day-to-day basis, and many future converts to Orthodoxy found in the temples they visited the living example of what this theologian was writing:

The liturgy of time has always had a double rhythm: that of repentance, preparation, effort, expectation – and this in liturgical terms, is the function of fasts, eves, vigils; and that of fulfillment and joy – and this is the *feast*. They represent and convey to us the two fundamental dimensions or experiences of Christian life. It is rooted, first of all, in the joy of knowing Christ, of being with Him, of remembering Him. And it is rooted, also, in the 'bright sadness' of repentance, in the experience of life as exile and effort. Both are extremely essential and to restore the liturgy of time is, therefore, to restore this basic rhythm.

Yet in the decades that have passed, our services are no longer filled to capacity, and many of our churches no longer have the full complement of feast day services. Secularism – the mindset of a society for whom God might exist, but to whom He does not particularly matter – has crept into our

lives. Our time is no longer liturgical but mundane; our lives are filled with commitments to school and society, work and play. Some commitments are clearly anti-Christian; some are good and charitable. But many come at the expense of our role as worshipping being.

What would Schmemmann say? Perhaps he would repeat what he wrote decades ago in *The Liturgical Problem*: “It is not true that people do not come to Church because they have no time. One always has time for what one enjoys.”

His memory calls on us to restore our dignity as “*homo adorans*,” to renew our commitment of time, talent and treasure to the Lord and His Church, to “commend ourselves and each other and our whole life unto Christ our God,” in the words of the Divine Liturgy.

Eucharistic Renewal

When I was a young boy, the rule of Slavic Orthodoxy here in America was one Confession, one Communion, once a year. When I served as an altar boy, almost always, except in Great Lent, I would watch the priest carry the chalice out of the altar, exclaiming, “in the fear of God and with faith and love draw near” – only to turn around and walk back into the altar, the chalice still full and covered. At most Liturgies, no one received the Eucharist but the clergy.

Father Alexander spearheaded a revival of the reception of the Eucharist that hearkened back to the practice of the early Church and to the great Fathers of the patristic era. He reminded us of the great gift Christ gave us in the Eucharist; how the Fathers encouraged faithful to receive on Sundays and feast days, memorial Saturdays, and the Wednesdays and Fridays of Great Lent. And he taught us how to properly prepare to receive the Holy Eucharist often: by a rhythm of repentance, a consciousness of our own sins, a return to the Lord and His ways, so that we can be healed through the sacrament of Confession. In *Theology and the Eucharist*, he tells us:

Our earthly food becomes the Body and Blood of Christ because it has been assumed, accepted, lifted up into the “age to come,” where Christ is indeed the very life, the very food of all life and the Church is His Body, “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23). It is there, finally, that we partake of the food of immortality, are made participants of the Messianic Banquet, of

the New Pascha; it is from there, “having seen the true light, having received the heavenly Spirit,” that we return into “this world” (“let us depart in peace”) as witnesses of the Kingdom which is “to come.” Such is the sacrament of the Church, the “*leitourgia*” which eternally transforms the Church into what she is, makes her the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.



In time, lines to the chalice became longer than the length of the temple – sometimes twice as long – every week, not just occasionally. I am grateful that this is still the case, but I worry that while Communion has become frequent, it has also become casual.

Do we prepare for the Eucharist in the way Father Alexander and patristic writers before him have taught us? Do we examine our conscience, pray the canons of repentance, confess from the heart? Father Alexander recalled the late practice of “general confession” in famous cases like that of St. John of Kronstadt and his cathedral of ten thousand souls. Father Alexander advocated for general confession so that we would properly prepare for the Eucharist each Sunday and be more sensitive to, and open about, our sins in the sacrament of Confession. But, as the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America insisted in its 1972 *Encyclical Letter on Confession and Communion*, general confession was never intended as, nor should it ever be, a replacement for private confession.

Father Schmemmann was fighting a serious problem. He taught that secular society has

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fully revealed
in the age to
come.*

downplayed and even denied the notion of “sin,” and that this attitude had even crept into the Church! I find the following excerpts from his important 1961 paper, *Some Reflections on Confession*, as relevant and provocative today as they were to Father Alexander half a century ago:

The secularization of Christian society made it open and receptive to humanistic and pragmatic philosophies of life, which radically obscured the Christian idea of sin and repentance...If an early Christian always knew that he was a sinner whose sins are forgiven and who, without any merit on his part, is introduced into the Bridal Chamber, given a new life, made partaker of the Kingdom, the modern Christian, since in the eyes of the society he is a decent man and a “nice fellow” always “feels fine” about himself and thoroughly enjoys his self-admiration. His vision of life, which, in turn, shapes his understanding of religion, excludes altogether any dimension of depth, be it that of his alienation from true life (sin) or that of a new life in Christ. From time to time he commits, to be sure, certain transgressions – very common and minor! – but, after all, who doesn’t?

Shocking, at least to me, is Father Alexander’s experience hearing confessions:

[When] I recently happened to confess about 50 people in a typical Orthodox parish in Pennsylvania, not one admitted to have committed any sin whatsoever! Are we not told daily by the press and other media of mass communication that we live in the best possible society among the best possible people? “Christian” people have taken this affirmation quite seriously.

In the same work, he offers this teaching, so vital to our present approach to how we receive this Mystery:

Confession, then, must be replaced in the perspective of the sacrament of penance. And each sacrament implies at least three equally essential elements: preparation, liturgical order, and fulfillment. If the whole life of the Church, but especially preaching and teaching are, as we have seen, preparation for repentance in a broad sense, there is room and need for special preparation. The Church has set apart special periods of repentance: Lent, Advent, other fasts. Here the liturgy itself becomes a “school

of repentance” (consult, for example, the inexhaustible riches of the Lenten Triodion), and it is the proper time to center preaching on the sacrament of penance itself. The order of Gospel readings, the Psalter, the hymns and prayers supply us with abundant material, the purpose of preaching being to “apply” all this to men, to their life, to their actual situation.

As we continue to receive the Eucharist frequently, perhaps every Sunday and feast day, let us also receive it worthily, not in a casual manner. Let us heed the teaching of Father Alexander, who knew all too well the warning of St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

For as often as you eat the Bread and drink the Cup, you proclaim the Lord’s Death until He comes again. Therefore whoever eats this Bread or drinks this Cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the Bread and drink of the Cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body. (I Cor. 12:26–29).

One Local Church

The third and final aspect of Father Schmemmann’s teaching that I would like to reflect on is his commitment to the one local Church here in this land. This is of course the teaching of the Scripture. Our Lord established one Church: “[O]n this rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18). The Pauline Epistles clearly testify to the one local Church in each place: “The Church of God which is at Corinth”; “To the Church of the Thessalonians”. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). In Greece, there is one local Church; so in Russia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and others. In each of those nations, the canons of Nicea are clearly evident: one Bishop in one city.

From the first presence of Orthodox missionaries in Alaska in 1794 until the Russian Revolution, there was one local Church in America, with Russian and Arab bishops working together. Now, however, there are 12 canonical jurisdictions in the United States, often working together through

the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, yet sometimes competing with one another. The dream of Father Schmemmann and the vision of the Tomos of autocephaly was that there would be one local canonical Church in the United States, fulfilling the mandate of the Scriptures, the canons and theology of Holy Orthodoxy. In his work *The Canonical Problem*, Father Alexander identifies the issue that faces us:

Nothing probably reveals better the nature of the crisis than the impressive amount of doctrines, rules, teachings and customs which, although taken for granted for centuries as essential for Orthodoxy, are by a wide consensus declared to be “impossible” here, in America. Speak to a Bishop, then to a priest, be he old or young, speak finally to an active and dedicated layman and you will discover that in spite of all differences between their respective points of view they all agree on the same “impossibilities.” Thus you will learn that it is impossible to enforce here the canonical norms of the Church, impossible to preserve from the wonderfully rich liturgical tradition of the Church anything except Sunday morning worship and a few “days of obligation” common in fact to all Christian “denominations,” impossible to stop non-Orthodox customs and practices, impossible to interest people in anything but social activities, impossible. But when you add up all these and many other “impossibilities” you must conclude, if you are logical and consistent, that for some reason it is impossible for the Orthodox Church in America to be Orthodox, at least in the meaning given this term “always, everywhere by all.”

Imagine having 53 bishops – every member of the Assembly of Bishops – celebrating Liturgy together in Yankee Stadium with Orthodox youth (from every jurisdiction) praying with them. What a witness to our Faith for them and for America! Imagine 53 bishops marching together on the National Mall in support of our persecuted brothers in the Middle East! Think of the financial savings of having one group health insurance plan for all the clergy and their families in this country! Father Alexander was committed to such vision.

The gift of autocephaly has committed the Orthodox Church in America to strive for such a future. This gift comes with a great responsibility:

to be the local Church here in this nation, to bring Orthodoxy to America, and to bring Americans to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith.

Those who knew Father Alexander as colleagues, those who studied under him as his students, those who are taught and inspired by his writings: all of us need to re-commit ourselves to such a vision and work toward making it happen in our lifetime. His words should convict us:

America, as every other nation, world, culture, society, is a great search and a great confusion, a great hope and a great tragedy, a thirst and a hunger. And, as every other nation or culture, it desperately needs Truth and Redemption. This means – and I write these words knowing how foolish they sound – that it needs Orthodoxy. If only Orthodoxy is what we believe and confess it to be, all men need it whether they know it or not, or else our confession and the very word Orthodoxy mean nothing. And if my words sound as an impossible foolishness, it is only because of us, Orthodox. It is our betrayal of Orthodoxy, our reduction of it to our own petty and selfish “national identities,” “cultural values,” “parochial interests” that make it look like another “denomination” with limited scope and doubtful relevance.

Dedication

As we commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the repose of Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, and as we dedicate this issue of *Jacob's Well* to his memory, let us, as admirers of this leader in our Orthodox Church in America, rekindle the vision of Father Alexander. Renewed by his writings, let us commit ourselves to living to its fullest the Orthodox Christian life, as the means to our own salvation and as a witness to our Lord, His Church and our Faith. Nourished by the frequent reception of the Mysteries of the Bread of Life and the Fountain of Immortality, and purified by confession and repentance, let us offer to the people of this nation “the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints” in the Church of undivided Christianity, as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in this land.

Grant rest eternal, in blessed repose, O Lord, to the soul of Thy departed servant, the ever-memorable Protopresbyter Alexander, who has fallen asleep, and make his memory to be eternal! – *“Vechnaya pamyat!”*

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Orthodox Christians live by the corporate experience of the Church. They do not live by personal “spiritual experiences” which, tragically, are very often destructively delusional.

The Embrace of a Full, Joyous Christian Life

by Serge Schmemmann

I don't know what the setting was or when it happened – perhaps a reader will remember – but at some point in his life Father Alexander remarked that he had no doubt God had a sense of humor. The proof, he said, was the hippopotamus, a beast for which there was no other possible explanation. He wasn't serious, of course; my father did have a sense of humor and liked to leaven his conversation and talks with quips and jokes.

This one, however, took on a life of its own. The quip got around, and people began giving him little plastic hippos, hippo cards, cuddly hippos...

I even got a necktie with a hippo. The hippo became a wonderful reflection of the warmth and happiness he brought to his family, friends, students and flock. He invited informality, sharing, celebration.

I think of this and all the other ways he extended his full, joyful life in the Church to an embrace of life in all its forms when I am invited to talk about how it was to grow up with him as my father, and especially now when I travel to Russia and encounter the remarkable impact Father Alexander's *Journals* have had there. When my mother first decided to publish these very personal diaries, she feared that they might give the impression of a

man given to complaining about the burden of his daily work. Certainly there is a sense of frustration now and again with the fuss of administrative work and the many inevitable small crises of the Seminary and the OCA, but I believe one purpose of the diaries was precisely to grouse a bit, to get things off his chest. What is more important is that these passages reflect a constant recognition, a constant yearning to return to what Father Alexander again and again refers to as the "most important" – the glorious joy of a full life in Christ.

In truth, Father Alexander was not a complainer. My recollections are of a father whose daily routine, extensive travels around America and the world, meetings, readings, writings and conversations were suffused with discipline and good spirit.

Leaving our home early in the morning for Matins at St. Vladimir's Seminary, he would walk briskly through the Crestwood suburb in his cassock, greeting smiling neighbors and dog-walkers, and from his office I can still hear the echo of David Drillock's loud laughter as they shared some new anecdote.

It was good to be around Father Alexander. For us as kids that was especially true at our summer retreat in the Laurentian hills of Quebec, where Father Alexander did much of his writing, and where we built a chapel in which Fathers John Meyendorff, Tom Hopko, Alexis Vinogradov, John Tkachuk and John Hopko were among the generations of relatives and friends to share in radiant summer worship. Father Alexander had a way of making everyday life a celebration. His daily brisk walks had grandiloquent names – "Versailles," "Road of Ruins" – and, as he did wherever he was, he plunged fully into the history, lore, politics and life of French Canada.

The summer feasts included St. Serge, Sts. Boris and Gleb, St. Mary Magdalene and of course Annunciation and Transfiguration, and to these we added our unique summer tradition of blessing the lake, which included a procession that neighbors stopped to watch. There were always many kids up there, and all were drawn into the celebration as singers or altar boys.

Father Alexander's love of America was equally full and contagious. He relished his walks through New York, his discovery of new cities, his visits to Orthodox parishes in the heartland. When I was drafted into the Army, and ordered to Vietnam, my father was proud, and I will never forget his parting words: "Today the rest of us are going back to what we always do, but you are headed for a great challenge."

"The source of 'false religion' is not knowing how to be joyful, or, more accurately, the rejection of joy," Father Alexander wrote in the *Journals*. "At the same time joy is so absolutely important because it is the indisputable fruit of an awareness of God's presence. It is impossible to know that God *is* and not rejoice."



On the eve of departure to the United States, Clamart, France

I find this excerpt from the *Journals* highlighted on one of the many blogs or chat groups dedicated to Father Alexander, and especially to the diaries since they first appeared in Russia in 2005. The reaction of Russians to these very personal musings – both positive and negative, but more often positive – is a phenomenon I have pondered, and have discussed with many Russians. There is even a video of quotes from the *Journals* set to a men's trio singing "Blessed are You O Lord; teach me Your statutes" (<http://russned.ru/video/otets-aleksandr-shmeman-dnevnik-i-fotografii-video>).

Of course my father's other works – *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy, Introduction to Liturgical Theology* and *The Eucharist* foremost among them, all translated and circulated widely and secretly in Soviet years – and his 30 years of weekly Russian-language broadcasts over Radio Liberty were well known among Russian believers and intellectuals. But what is it about the diaries that finds so powerful a resonance in a country Father Alexander never visited, but a country in which he nonetheless felt profound spiritual roots? Why is a ministry that was so dedicated to proclaiming the universal truth of Orthodoxy in the New World so important to people emerging from seven decades of imposed godlessness?

The answer, at least in part, I believe, is that the questions, affirmations and celebrations of the *Journals* confirm to Russians seeking to restore their own links to Orthodoxy, that their faith, liberated from Communist repression and stripped of nationalist claptrap, can be fully and joyously lived even in the modern, secular world.

The *Journals* were published in Russia in 2005, roughly 20 years after Mikhail Gorbachev first began to loosen the bonds on religion and 15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In those years Russians rushed headlong to reclaim an identity and a tradition the communists had banned. Millions of Russians were baptized, thousands of ruined churches and monasteries were restored, thousands were ordained to the priesthood or took monastic vows.

But for many people the forms of the past failed to provide answers for a confusing present. By the time the *Journals* appeared, the euphoria of the first taste of freedom had faded, attendance at the regilded temples was down to West European

levels, and many of the new pastors focused on trying to restore an idealized past and railing at an incomprehensible present.

At about that time I traveled through Russia with my wife working on an article about the Russian Orthodox Church for the *National Geographic*. I remember especially vividly a meeting with Archimandrite Kirill Epifanov, the dynamic abbot of the Spassky Monastery in Murom, which he had lovingly restored to its ancient majesty. That had been the easy part, he told us sadly; we have not restored religious life.

"The Soviet regime was the product of faithlessness, but at least it allowed real believers to live the flame of faith," he says. "Today we are more concerned with fighting sects and 'enemies' than with repentance. These forces are tearing the church from within."



Fr. Alexander with his wife, Juliana, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Abruptly, Father Kirill ran off to another room and returned with a copy of the *Journals*, thick with Post-its. He began enthusiastically reading the passages he had marked, passages that addressed many of the problems he encountered, and also passages demonstrating that even in this bewildering, secular new world – even in the West that now seemed so threatening, wanton and distant from Orthodoxy – a devout Orthodox priest could find joy and beauty and faith.

Father Kirill, alas, died not long after in a car accident. But on a recent surf through the Russian blogs, I came across Father Peter Meshcherinov, a popular hieromonk in Moscow who had found similar reassurance and inspiration in the diaries. Father Peter describes reading the diaries as drinking "fresh, pure water"; as an answer to the question posed by so many Orthodox Christians in Russia on what it means to live "in the Church" today. By coincidence, he identified the passage I cited above as the most important in the *Journals*.

"Communities seem not to form, asceticism seems not to bear fruit, conserving what was or

Continued on page 14



WHO is Fr. Alexander?

by Fr. Alexis Vinogradov

I recently sat opposite a group of young cinematographers from Russia. They were at best teenagers or younger when Fr. Alexander Schmemmann died in 1983, and like most of their generation they never met him in person. They know of him through stories about him and his own writings and recorded radio broadcasts. This little group of Schmemmann fans was interviewing me, along with others in America who knew Fr. Alexander, for a documentary on his life and work. Especially poignant is the fact that besides not having met Fr. Alexander, this is a generation that in its youth was effectively surrounded by an atheistic culture, most of them coming to faith later in life.

What can explain the exponential popularity, not only of Fr. Schmemmann's works, but also of the man himself, among people who never knew the man? What is it about him as a person that has drawn such a following; especially in a nation that has obliterated its religious past?

The specific phenomenon of his growing influence in Russia can certainly be explained by a long spiritual famine that is now a century old, from the insurgency of communism into Holy Mother Russia, and the establishment of the militantly atheistic Soviet State. Yet, there is another, possibly more important explanation, but one which is not as evident and touches upon the religious reality in the West as well. This is to say, as Fr. Schmemmann himself would caution, that the greatest danger to faith lies not so much in that which is obviously and blatantly against religion, but rather, and more often, from religion itself! In other terms, one must look into the nature of the religion practiced and taught even as it survived in the grueling conditions of Soviet oppression, and the martyrdom of thousands of faithful.

In his now famous lines, Fr. Alexander stated his "two NOs and one YES": NO to Religion, NO to Secularism, and YES to the Kingdom of God! While atheism falls under the rubric of Secularism (the world for itself without God), Religion is a much trickier problem because generally it is

regarded as a benign and even socially good thing in whatever form.

To better understand Fr. Schmemmann's caution concerning Religion – and this is extremely important for us in the West as well – it is important to begin to understand the man behind the message.

It is very telling that when Fr. Alexander himself was often asked to write or speak about other theologians or churchly personalities, he would regularly focus precisely on aspects of their character as the living context of their theology. A great example, easily found now on Google, is his article titled *Three Metropolitans*, in which he describes Metropolitans Leonty, Vladimir, and Evlogy. All three could not have been more different from each other in time, space, and personality, and yet they each incarnated the Orthodox Christian spirit by the mode of their life. For Fr. Alexander, the "truth" of one's theology must be manifested by the way in which that theology is lived. Here is a snippet on each one of the Metropolitans from that article:

Evlogy: "He held no *administrative* authority over us but nonetheless each one of us felt that we belonged to him, that we were needed and even indispensable participants in his life and service in their most important expressions."

Vladimir: "How disturbed he was with any kind of insincerity, from an affected *spiritual* style, from precisely that pseudo-spirituality that frequently flourishes where there is no real spirituality."

Leonty: "He never insisted on anything, he never imposed anything. If he was invited somewhere, he would go. If he was not invited, he didn't go nor did he ever look for invitations. If he went somewhere he would always bring a present: some small packet, a book or simply, a check. Money flowed through his hands and didn't stick to them. We can now recall, with shame for our Church, that he would help out poorly paid priests, widows and other clerics, from his own pocket."

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Personally, Fr. Alexander disdained any flourishes about his own importance to the Church, but if we can gather a hint from his description of the Metropolitans, or in another example, the liturgical prayerfulness and “presence” of a Father Bulgakov, then it is certain that he recognized qualities that were also inherently in him. Like Evlogy, Fr. Schmemmann made each person feel that they “belong” to him, because he was genuinely interested in each one he met. Like Vladimir he abhorred all pseudo-spirituality of dress and style and language that abounds so frequently especially in Russian piety, and now regrettably in America. And like Leonty, Fr. Alexander also never “imposed” himself, but functioned joyfully (though not necessarily always “happily”) within the often-ambiguous ways of American Orthodoxy.

Fr. Alexander was, as Professor Kesich so succinctly said at his funeral, a “free man in Christ!” It is this indomitable freedom that rings through his words and texts, whether we see them on a page,

hear his voice in a recording, or watch his joyful and loving and honest smile on film. The answer to the authorities of the men sent to arrest Christ (John 7:46) was: “No man ever spoke like this man!” Whenever I hear that passage, my mind goes to Fr. Alexander, for what remains is not only the content of his words, but especially the *manner* in which he spoke and wrote them. What permeates the work of this “free man in Christ” is not only the soundness of his theology, but what that theology is deeply rooted in: the love of God and neighbor shown by Fr. Alexander’s own unique presence among us!



Fr. Alexander and Fr. Joseph Pishtey with His Beatitude Metropolitan Leonty.

Encounters with Fr. Alexander Schmemmann by Fr. John Jillions

I regularly recall three encounters with Fr. Alexander.

In the winter of 1975 he came to Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Montreal, where I was a university student. I remember very clearly his insistence that “everyone must have his own theology.” As long as this faith remains only of the Fathers and the Saints then it is unreal and has not yet made its way deeply into my mind, soul and heart.

In 1978, my first year at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Fr. Alexander was presiding at the Matins of Great and Holy Saturday. Burned into my memory is the image of Fr. Alexander censoring briskly as the first proclamation of the resurrection broke through the darkness and the lights went on: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes...By destroying the power of death, O Savior, Thou didst raise Adam and save all men from hell!” Fr. Alexander’s face was radiant and determined, even defiant, and I thought of the verse from Isaiah, “I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame” (Isaiah 50:7).

In the Spring of 1983 Fr. Alexander was already sick with cancer. I had graduated from seminary three years earlier and was working at Banker’s Trust next to the World Trade Center, contemplating a difficult decision about ordination to the priesthood. I rarely spoke with Fr. Alexander over the years – I was in awe of him and always tongue-tied – but I knew I needed his advice, so I called him from the lobby payphone. He listened carefully to my dilemma and then said, “John, you always know where the easy way comes from.”

These three encounters and others continue to guide me, as do his writings (especially his *Journals*). He was a man of utter inner honesty and devotion to Christ as the truth, which no piety, no ideology and no idols must be allowed to distort.

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Fr. Alexander Schmemmann – A Personal Memoir

by Fr. Paul Lazor

[This is from Fr. Lazor's presentation delivered at the 23rd Annual Fr. Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture on January 27, 2007. The full text is available online by doing a search of the title.]



The Father Alexander Schmemmann I have been blessed to *know, remember and love* is a man with grandparents and parents to whom he referred with respect throughout his life. He was a man who fully shared his life with “Liana” (Juliana), his beloved wife and faithful friend, with whom he had children and grandchildren, who in turn were objects of the couple’s mutual love and ongoing attention. He was a Russian-Parisian who knew and loved the names of particular streets, sites and noteworthy annual events in both Paris and New York; who was regularly in a straightforward dialogue about “the truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:14) in both Europe and America; who demonstrated a special familiarity and sympathy toward the languages and cultural contexts of the many places and persons he came to know and serve. He was reverently at home at the holy altar of the Church, especially that of the Seminary Chapel, where he celebrated the liturgy and preached God’s word with great focus, depth and joy. He was profoundly conscious of being in God’s presence at another, more humble kind of altar: the sacred desk of his little office at home, where, looking through the window and observing keenly the daily weather, he was prompted by an inner voice (as he once described his mode of writing) to write (by hand) his books and articles, and to respond personally to myriad letters.

He was comfortable at the table of a great French or Armenian restaurant, but also enjoyed himself enormously at a typical American picnic, holding a “good old” hotdog, as he called it, in one hand, and a cold beer in the other. He was attracted to the greatest intellectuals and writers (not only to their thoughts, but especially to their biographies, where he noted carefully the manner

in which they identified and worked through the difficult issues of their lives, i.e., how they, as he would say, “dealt with what they were dealt”). He often read as many as one such book per week. He was equally appreciative, however, of the pious and simple, labor-class parishioners of the many Orthodox parishes throughout America where he regularly conducted retreats and lectures. This is the *man* I recall with love and gratitude...

Late in the summer of 1982, after returning from his “break” in Labelle, Canada, Fr. Alexander met personally with Natasha and me and informed us that, since the beginning of his summer stay in Canada, he had not been feeling well. He spoke calmly, saying that in his adult life he had never been really sick, and was fully cognizant of the incredible blessings bestowed on him. During a lengthy stay at the New York Hospital in the final week of September and early October, his condition was diagnosed as cancer. When he was released from the Hospital, he summoned Fr. Hopko, David Drillock and me to his home after Vespers one evening to inform us of the diagnosis. Once again, he spoke calmly and courageously, stating that by no means was he giving up. He was ready to obey the doctors and do all that was possible to fight this terrible disease. Nevertheless, he made sober admission that everything, including life, has its limits and, sooner or later, in one or another way, all things in this world must come to an end. He asked for our understanding, support and prayers.

After several months, the chemotherapy and other difficult treatments he endured during his many regular trips to medical facilities in New York City began to take their toll. His body weakened. He began to lose his hair. On one occasion, as we walked side by side across the Seminary grounds near the monument at the bottom of the Chapel’s hillside, he reached up to his head and simply pulled out a clump of his hair, As he scattered the clump into the air, he turned to me and, revealing a certain sadness, said: “It will be a humiliation to the end!” His appetite also began to fade. Yet, one morning over our breakfast after Matins in the

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Seminary refectory, he again “seasoned” my life with one of his incredible, intensely profound statements. As he observed me eating heartily, he peacefully smiled and in a humorous tone said: “Father Paul, you are in good health and eating so well, while I am sick and can barely sip my coffee.” Then he added: “As you know, however, some of us die sick, and others of us die healthy, but we all die!”

Many other scenes come to mind as I recall the last months of Fr. Alexander’s earthly life. He continued to serve in the Chapel, but liturgical celebration became more difficult for him. He sometimes stumbled in his physical movements or lost his place in the order of service. Once, as we stood together at the high place while the Epistle was being read during the Divine Liturgy, he turned to me and said: “I simply cannot preach.” At his request and by the Grace of God, I stepped forward

immediately after the Gospel reading and offered the homily. The only time I saw Fr. Alexander actually “break down,” as we say, was at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (Nov. 21). He had returned to the sanctuary after the Liturgy, and, with his back to the altar, leaned against the wall near the entrance to the sacristy. With his face hidden in the curve of his supporting arm, he wept audibly and uncontrollably for some time. He nodded in appreciation as efforts were made to console him, but he, and all of us with him in reverential respect, largely refrained from words.

A host of other memorable occasions could easily be mentioned. Especially noteworthy was the last Divine Liturgy Fr. Alexander celebrated, on Thanksgiving Day of 1983, and the magnificent homily he offered on that occasion. Instances such

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Father Schmemmann's Legacy: Leadership is Influence by Albert S. Rossi, PhD

Thirty-four years ago I converted to Orthodoxy at the St. Vladimir’s Seminary Chapel. Alive, thriving and larger-than-life, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann was an authentic leader. Leadership is influence and he had a life-altering influence on many, many persons, far and near.

I think, among his many contributions, is the distilled legacy of his transformative influence upon the persons who came in contact with him, personally or through his talks and books. He changed people. Particularly, he transformed so many young seminarians into priests who carried the Lord’s message, the message he articulated to multitudes. Multitudes.

And he influenced so many outside the Orthodox Church. I recall listening to an audio tape of Thomas Merton’s last conference to his novices at the Roman Catholic Trappist Monastery where he was leaving as Novice Master to live in a Hermitage on the property. I am always fascinated by the last words of someone, the summation of what they want to leave as their own legacy. Merton said that he had a box with a book for each novice and he asked each of them to read the book, twice. I recall pausing the tape and wondering what book Merton would hold in such high regard. Who in Roman Catholicism or anywhere could be the author of the treasure Merton wanted to leave behind? He didn’t leave one of his own many books. No. The book he gave to the Roman Catholic Trappist novices was Fr. Schmemmann’s book, *For the Life of the World*.

That little anecdote holds a lifetime of meaning for me. How could one calculate the influence of such a moment? Who could find the metric to measure the lasting impact upon each novice and all whom they would influence? How many more such intimate and compelling narratives are hidden in the history of Fr. Schmemmann’s lasting influence on those who are trying to live *For the Life of the World*?

Thirty years is an all-too-short amount of time to try to discern Fr. Schmemmann’s legacy. I think we are just beginning to appreciate how Christ used him to transform so many of us. I, for one, am eternally grateful for all he did to my spirit.

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rushing toward renewal lose their allure with time, often becoming a tiring form of activism without Christian content,” he wrote of what was happening in Russia. “...And here, in the diaries, we have the example of the life of Father Alexander: There’s no need to destroy established traditions, but only to give them meaning, to trace them to their source – to live by Christ, to be His Church personally and responsibly. To fill every moment of life with the joyous experience of the Kingdom of God that has been given to us in the Church, to put it into our culture, into our modern reality, into everything that touches man. This path is possible for everyone.”

Many other Russians have found many different messages, but this one, I believe, is the key. It is very hard for us in America to imagine what the Russians have gone through in their lifetimes, to appreciate how total and wrenching was the change

they experienced.

I find it very heartening, indeed wonderful, that my father’s embrace of a full, joyous Christian life is helping Russians on their difficult journey. When there, I tell them about the hippo, and the laughter, and how he could transform a summer stroll into a celebration, and how he embraced America, and about his profound love of poetry and his full involvement in the politics, debates and trials of this world.

I know how important this is for them because I know how important it is for me, for all of us.

[Serge Schmemmann lives in Paris and is a member of the editorial board of The New York Times. His article, “Quick History,” appears weekly in The Times.]

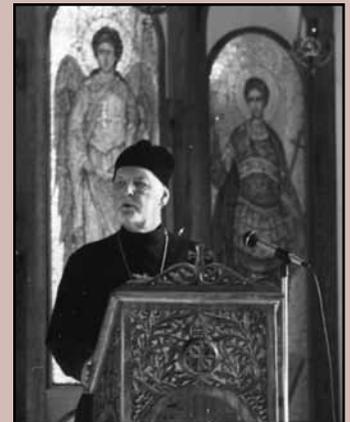
30 Years Later

by Dr. Paul Meyendorff

It has been 30 years since Fr. Alexander passed away after a long struggle with cancer. Many, possibly a majority, of the people in our parishes were not alive in 1983, much less had the opportunity to meet him in person or to hear him preach or give talks. For the rest of us, he has become a distant memory. Yet his legacy remains alive and well in our churches. And even far beyond them.

Our parishes celebrate the Divine Liturgy in a language that people can understand. The so-called “secret prayers” are in many places read aloud, giving everyone the opportunity regularly to experience what is deepest in the Church’s theology. Many of the faithful receive Communion weekly, something that was not possible before, when one had to go to sacramental confession each time before receiving Communion. Communion, no longer understood as simply an act of individual, personal piety, is now experienced by many as an ecclesial act, as a common experience of the entire assembly affirming its identity as the Body of Christ. As a pastor and a teacher, Fr. Alexander exuded an infectious joy, particular through his experience of the Liturgy, and this sense has been passed on to us by his many students at the seminary who now serve as parish priests throughout America.

Father Schmemmann’s legacy extends far beyond our shores. Through his many books and recorded lectures, the eucharistic revival he led here is being experienced in many parts of the Orthodox world – in Russia, in Serbia, in Greece...His books have been and continue to be translated into dozens of languages. His memoirs have become a best-seller in Russia, where people are amazed to see an Orthodox priest who is open to and able to engage the contemporary world, its culture, its literature, its poetry, its politics, in a positive and non-defensive way. For he truly loved the world, despite its obvious imperfections — and to this world he always sought to bring the joy of the Gospel!



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as these, however, have been well remembered by others. His unforgettable, last sermon has been published and widely distributed, and is read annually in the Chapel at the Liturgy on Thanksgiving Day.

A final recollection from his earthly life, involving me directly, is connected with a last visit Fr. Thomas Hopko, David Drillock and I, along with our wives, made to Fr. Alexander in New York Hospital. Matushka Juliana and Masha were also there, bringing the total number of visitors to eight. Fr. Alexander had taken a turn for the worse. Fr. Tom brought Holy Communion for him, and we also had with us the sanctified oil remaining from the Sacrament of Holy Unction, which, weeks earlier, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS and other clergy had celebrated over Fr. Alexander in the Seminary Chapel. During our visit to him, Fr. Alexander was fairly alert and, by facial expression and gesture, indicated a full awareness of our presence. Fr. Tom gave him Holy Communion. We prayed over and anointed him again with the holy oil. Fr. Tom then pronounced the dismissal, and, offering Fr. Alexander the cross for veneration, said in a strong voice: "Amen." To this Fr. Alexander responded: "Amen. Amen. Amen." As our visit reached its conclusion, Fr. Schmemmann and I exchanged a final

and direct glance, at which time I humbly asked him the following question: "Do you bless us to continue your work?" Once more, this great and wonderful man seasoned my life in a way that remains vivid to this very evening. His seasoning during those last precious moments consisted in his *saying nothing*, but through his silence, gentle smile and a slight turning away of his head, *saying everything*. With clarity I heard him say: "The Church is not mine. The Seminary is not mine. All things have been offered in thanksgiving to God! He will take care of things. He will provide the 'successors' appropriate to continue His holy work!"

Let us conclude in prayer. Let us pray to the Lord:

O God of spirits and of all flesh, who, through the Pascha of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has trampled down death, and overthrown the devil, and given life to Thy world; grant rest to the soul of Thy departed servant, the Protopresbyter, Alexander, in the place of brightness, refreshment, and joy, of which he was such a faithful and trustworthy witness during his earthly sojourn! May his memory be eternal!

Jacob's well

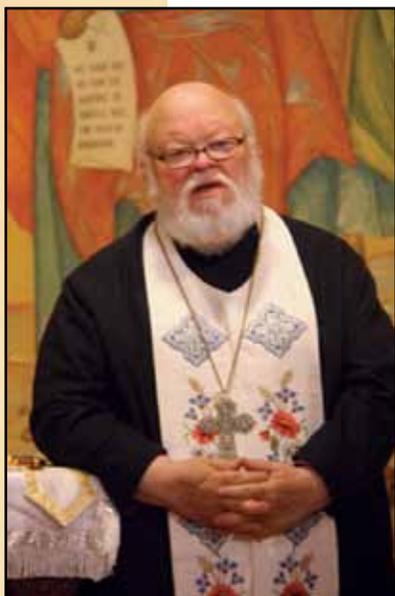
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*Fr. Schmemmann with Fr. Lazor, Hierarchs,
and the Graduating Class of 1980*

Tell the Story by Fr. Thomas Edwards

Nearly eleven years ago I retired as pastor of Holy Apostles Church in Saddle Brook, N.J. having served the parish for twenty-nine years. Fast forward to May 31, 2014, Matushka Evelyn and I returned to Holy Apostles from our home in Pennsylvania to celebrate the parish's forty-fifth anniversary. Being present in the altar and praying with Bishop Michael and the other priests, "...who stand about Thy holy altar..." was for me, one of those, "...don't know if we were in heaven or on earth..." moments.



Fr. Edwards

At the luncheon following the Liturgy, Bishop Michael said something which resonated with everyone. Making reference to remarks that Fr. John Nehrebecki, Dean Emeritus and I had made, our Bishop and Shepherd of the Diocese told us that in order for a parish to grow it has to "tell the story." Bishop Michael reminded us that the Gospels and the whole Bible were written to "tell the story."

Everyone can relate to a good story and there are countless ones within every parish history. These are the stories of how people put into practice works of mercy, live the Beatitudes, and follow the Great Commandments to love God and neighbor. These need to be told.

When I heard Bishop Michael say the words, "tell the story" which he repeated many times, I was taken back to earlier in the morning during the Divine Liturgy. I was next to the holy altar looking out into what His Grace had called a "jewel box" of a church. As the faithful came to receive Holy Communion the choir was singing, "Receive the Body of Christ..." over and over. But this day seemed somehow different. I not only saw each communicant but in my recall of times gone by, I saw all those founders, benefactors, and faithful who I had baptized, communed, married and buried. So many had gone to their eternal reward, but their presence was still very much in that church. I think of the words from *Les Miserables*: "Empty chairs and empty tables, all my friends are dead and

gone..." Yes, so many of our dear parish friends are "dead and gone," but each had a story we can tell.

An early one concerned two of our deceased founders, John Hoc and Eddie Yuhas. They were both working at the shell of the new church when they became ill. Within hours John reposed in the Lord and Eddie was taken to the hospital and reposed in two days. Talk about working for the church.

Then there are the innumerable stories to tell about the Myrrhbearing Women of Holy Apostles. These women did amazing things for the parish. I think every refrigerator in Saddle Brook, Garfield and Clifton had one of their felt magnets of a cow, "Holy Cow Are You Eating Again?" They sold them for mere change, but these and other projects turned into many thousands of dollars to help support the work of Holy Apostles Church. God reward them one and all.

There is the story of Elizabeth Renavitz. It was my first year in the parish, and the Divine Services were being held in Garfield's Amvets Hall. Matushka and I were at our daughter Laura's first grade "Back to School Night." I saw an older woman in the classroom, all alone and crying. I went over to her. "Is something wrong? Is there anything I can do to help you?" She told me that her daughter had been killed on a motorcycle and she was left to raise her six year old grandson, Michael, a student in our daughter's class. I tried to comfort her as best I could. I asked her if she belonged to a church. She answered, "I am Russian Orthodox, but have no way to get to a church." I told her, "I'm a Russian Orthodox priest. If you and your grandson would like to come to church I can arrange a ride..." For years Ray Obsuth (still an active member of the parish) drove Elizabeth Renavitz and her son Michael to our church. Michael became an altar server and on a few occasions lived with us in the rectory when his grandmother was hospitalized. The entire parish rallied to this family's needs and did so for years. "I was a stranger and you took me in."

And the final story is about the Turzynski family. Kazimierz, an immigrant from Poland, was deaf and mute. His wife, Kui, also deaf and mute was

from Hong Kong. They had been received into the Orthodox Church by a blind Orthodox priest from Baghdad who lived in Passaic. (You can't make this stuff up.) This priest, Fr. John Odisho, was a frequent visitor to Holy Apostles and served at our altar. Fr. John recommended that the Turzynski family and their young daughter Coleen join our parish. I knew a little Sign Language, but most of our communication was done at the coffee hour where we wrote back and forth on the paper table coverings. Sometime later, Kazimierz's Roman Catholic mother, Teresa visited from her village outside of Warsaw. She came to Holy Apostles for several Sundays. She too was deaf and mute but, unlike her son, knew no English. The parish made her feel very much at home as evidenced by the beautiful smile on her face in photos on the church steps. At the coffee hour our paper tablecloth chat had to go from written English to written Polish back and forth. But with good people even this type of conversation is relatively easy.

Then the unimaginable happened. Our telephone rang and a man identified himself as being from the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office. He asked, "Do you know Kazimierz Turzynski?" He told me he was looking at the Holy Apostles Church calendar on the wall in the Turzynski kitchen. I listened in horror. Our parishioners, Kazimierz, his wife Kui and Mieczyslaw, his father visiting from Poland, had been ritualistically stabbed to death with a machete. Coleen, the seventeen-month-old daughter, had survived a week among the bodies of her parents and grandfather by eating Cheerios and drinking water from the toilet. She was alive. It was the church calendar on the wall that led the authorities to Holy Apostles and with this link they were able to contact the mother in Poland. Who can imagine the anguish this mother felt when she was given the news? "I weep and I wail when I think upon death..."

Immediately the good people of Holy Apostles sprang into action and provided great comfort to this grieving woman. "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." Subdeacon Peter Eagler

contacted LOT, the Polish Airlines, and secured free round trip fares for the mother and surviving son to come from Poland to the U.S. Ed Kugler, the parish funeral director, offered his services free of charge including two caskets and hearses. Kui's family arranged for her remains to be flown back to them in Hong Kong. My family offered burial plots for the father and son.

The media was all over this story. On the evening of the Parastas and the morning of the burial the church was filled beyond capacity. One whole side of the church was reserved for the Deaf Community. Two sign language interpreters volunteered their



Current pastor, Fr. Matthew Brown, and honored parishioners.

services. One interpreted the prayers and choir response into American Sign and the other into Polish Sign for those who came from Poland. What an emotionally charged experience for everyone. To go from the satanic brutality of these deaths to the beauty and reassurance of "the resurrection of the dead" as expressed so beautifully in our Orthodox burial hymns has no comparison with anything this world has to offer. "Blessed is the way in which you shall walk today, O soul, for a place of rest is prepared for you..."

It is our parish stories that we need to tell. It is these stories which teach us and others, how to see the Divine Image in everyone with whom we have a providential encounter. Bishop Michael exhorted us, "Tell the story." Glory to God for all things.

Of all accusations against Christians the most terrible one was uttered by Nietzsche when he said that Christians had no joy. Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God (quoting Leon Bloy). There is only one sadness, that of not being a saint (quoting Charles Peguy).

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A "Slice of Life" from Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers, NY

Why should pizza be the only thing deliciously served by the slice in Yonkers? Here is a "slice of life" from Holy Trinity Church, consecrated in 1906 by Saints Tikhon of Moscow, Raphael of Brooklyn, and Alexander Hotovitzky...and still, with God's help, striving to keep the Faith and grow the Kingdom!

Keeping Our Kids Connected to Christ

"HTO YOUth" and a New Teen Room: Thanks to considerable contributions of time, treasure, and sweat from our laypeople, we have renovated one of our Church School classrooms into a spacious and colorful Teen Room! Not only do our high school

and several times a year, they grace our stage with memorable skits and songs!

The "Unexpected Joy" Girls' Choir: This choir is a means to connect our young ladies to their parish family within the experience of the Liturgy, and to consecrate their immense talents to God. This group of girls can be found singing both on their own, having prepared special hymns for Sunday and Pre-Sanctified Liturgies, and as part of the adult choir. They have shared a summer retreat together and were featured in the parish's presentation of the Broadway musical, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat".



Parish "In-Reach"

Saints Martha and Mary Women's Fellowship, a group comprised mainly of wives and mothers whose aim is to make the second half of life more spiritual and prayerful, meets one Friday each month for great fellowship, snacks, and discussions of books, faith, and life.

Marriage Retreat: Last summer, when Fr. Constantine Nasr visited the Diocese to lead our Parish Council Conferences, we recruited him to present a parish Marriage Retreat, "Mastering the Art of Marriage." Ten married and engaged couples came to learn from Fr. Constantine's wisdom and experience, with the engaged and newly married couples gaining the skills needed to navigate both the joys and challenges of marriage, as well as giving more mature marriages a "shot in the arm".

students meet there for Sunday classes, but they can play air hockey, watch movies, read, plan our "HTO YOUth" group's service projects and social outings, and just relax. We have made inroads toward establishing an OCF chapter at nearby Manhattan College, with one Orthodox student from an upstate New York parish having already made Holy Trinity his spiritual "home away from home" as a result.

Homebound Parishioner Visitations have become a joy-filled effort spanning across generations. Church School children and teachers bake cookies and breads for our homebound family members. The children have joined in on many visitations, especially during the Christmas season, where our loved ones confined to nursing homes and their own homes were greeted by the smiles and singing voices of Christmas carolers both young in years and young at heart! A lay-led visitation ministry team has stepped up to the plate in a big way, giving rides to parishioners who cannot get to church by themselves and greatly supplementing Father's visitations with their own. If someone cannot come to Church...the Church comes to them!

An Energetic Church School: Our faithful students and our team of teachers keep things lively with an ever-growing blend of lessons, projects, and ministries. Our founders blessed us with a spacious Christian Education Building, which our kids continue to decorate with colorful artwork focused on the Church Year and Lenten themes...

Many Years! Over the course of his parish visits, Bishop Michael has ordained our senior altar server, Christopher Nolan, to the rank of Sub-Deacon; elevated our long-serving parish Deacon John Eby to the office of Protodeacon; and awarded parish Rector Fr. David Cowan the Kamilavka and Gold Cross. Most recently, in May of 2014, we rejoiced in the first priestly ordination to be held at Holy Trinity Church in many years, as Bishop Michael, on behalf of Metropolitan Tikhon, ordained Fr. Kyle Parrott, our parish intern and Co-Valedictorian of St. Vladimir's Seminary Class of 2014 (M.Div.), to the Holy Priesthood.

Part of a Greater Family

Giving In Gratitude: In thanksgiving to God for a very generous parishioner's bequest, given under the auspices of the "Legacy Society" instituted by Pastor Emeritus Fr. Yaroslav Sudick, we decided to donate \$7,500 per year in 2012 and 2013 to the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Fund. We are pleased and humbled that these funds are bearing fruit in the lives of sister parishes within the Diocese who are struggling to cover costs and provide for their clergy.

St. Andrew's Camp Fundraiser: In June 2013, a garden tea and basket raffle hosted in our fellowship hall raised over \$6,000 toward a new boys' dorm for our Diocesan camp. We were happy to see this event become an energetic collaboration of persons and parishes across the Diocese, as Camp supporters from the New Jersey and New York State Deaneries teamed up to plan and staff the fundraiser.

"St. Nicholas Project" for Seminary Families: Annually at Christmastime, in a lay-coordinated effort, parishioners donate toward the purchase of Christmas gifts for seminarian families. A special coffee hour is hosted on the Sunday following St. Nicholas Day, when the seminarians, wives and children visit the parish, and our faithful can become better acquainted with our future priests, deacons, matushki, and church leaders. In addition, parishioners regularly volunteer to open up our social hall – which is also a basketball court – for seminarians from St. Vladimir's to come and let off some steam shooting hoops!

Who Is Our Neighbor?

Gifts to Project Mexico and St. Innocent Orphanage: Although much of the aforementioned

bequest was urgently needed for repairs to our roof and cupolas, and some was shared with the DDB program, the Parish Council was adamant that this great blessing also be shared with those in the greatest of need...and so we were able to make substantial offerings in both 2012 and 2013 to Project Mexico. An "Adopt-An-Orphan" drive for St. Innocent Orphanage in Tijuana was undertaken as well.

Trinity Plaza Transformation: In the story of Joseph and his brothers, we learn that what the devil means for evil, God will turn for good. This truth has unfolded before our eyes here in Yonkers, as a frightening incident of vandalism on Fr. David's car in spring 2012 has galvanized the entire Trinity Plaza neighborhood into a united effort to motivate the City of Yonkers into enhancing the streets, the lighting, and the quality of life in the Trinity Plaza neighborhood following decades of decay. Our parish hosts regular Community Meetings, where the Mayor, City Council members, and the Police Department leadership come and converse with parishioners and neighbors about our needs and hopes for this venerable but neglected corner of Yonkers. We have a close relationship with Yonkers 4th Precinct Commanding Officer Captain John Mueller, a devout Christian himself whose tireless labors on our behalf personify the possibility, and need, for followers of Christ to work together in whatever ways God will bless.

"Neighbor Day:" Last Thanksgiving, our neighbors in the Kristensen Senior Apartments across the street invited Fr. David to bless their Thanksgiving meal, and welcomed him and his family to stay for dinner. Holy Trinity parishioners baked pumpkin breads for all the apartments' residents and sent them over with Father. Then, in January, we hosted "Neighbor Day," a luncheon and tour of the church for our neighbors in the Kristensen Apartments. Our laypeople have also served meals and do food and clothing drives for the Casa Juan Diego Hospitality Center, up the street from our parish, and Emmaus House in Harlem.

We are happy to have the opportunity to share a "snapshot" of our life in Yonkers with the rest of our Diocesan family. We welcome all to come and visit us here, if you are passing through the Hudson Valley!

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*All too often
religious
mysticism,
including the
mysticism of
the Church
members,
including those
of very high
ranking, is
nothing but
mist, I, and
schism.*

Measuring a Parish: St. Gregory the Theologian Church – Fifty Years in the Hudson Valley

Our human love of anniversaries answers our need to validate and mark the progress of our life. Anniversaries give meaning and definition to our efforts. In marriage it marks the success of surviving struggles, defeats, hardships and the endurance of two or more (with children and relatives) personalities growing side by side. One can say that committed parish life may in some measure be one step up from marriage because the personalities do not come together by choice or attraction. People arrive at a parish knowing that it is the local gathering of the One Universal Christian Church, gathered with her same Lord throughout the world in numerous other parishes. They accept to enter a cohesive group that is already working in harmony, and they naturally expect to be received and embraced by this group. With our diversity of politics, economic needs and

before Autocephaly defined the uniquely American character of the Church that now transcended all ethnic and cultural limitations, the Founders of St. Gregory's fixed into their by-laws the decision for English as the language of worship to consciously curtail any sentimental backsliding into "favorite" forms of Orthodoxy. This parish was to be a living invitation to every person in the surrounding culture to fully enter the Body of Christ. In all these years the parish has been pastored by priests George Timko, Pitirim Stehnach (first permanent pastor), Thomas Hopko ('68-'78), and Alexis Vinogradov ('78 to present). Since 1994 Fr. Michael Plekon has also served at the altar of St. Gregory's.

Father Alexander Schmemmann, to whom this issue of *Jacob's Well* is devoted, remarked that the Church is not a place to which one goes in order to get some emotional satisfaction, an addendum of religious feelings to improve life. Rather, Fr. Alexander insisted, we assemble together in order to *become* the Church. It is only when we are intentionally gathered in Christ (the "two or three" of the Gospel) that we are transformed and *become* His Church, His bride. So, in her fifty years, St. Gregory's has avoided the trappings of a fixed institution for select members, and some kind of social or political standing in the secular community. One can say that the clergy have literally served several "parishes" that have come through this one geographically consecrated spot on the map. Families enter and move on, and our fervent hope is that the seeds of our orientation towards God, and that "other" lasting Kingdom, become the fruits that our members carry into their adult college and work life and in the planting of holy families everywhere, remaining always bound to us in faith and in love.

The gathering of so many families and pilgrims on this past Bright Saturday and Thomas Sunday (April 26-27) around our primate bishops, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, and His Grace Bishop Michael, proved our anniversary to be a symbol that this Kingdom to come is already given as gift and foretaste of her citizens, young and old.

To God be glory everywhere!



expectations, ethnic preferences and habits, family customs and cultural mores – all this makes parish life in America a serious challenge. The "village" is no more. In some measure, then, the parish can be a gathering of strangers, or it can strive to become in time a New Village, one no longer defined by geographical neighborhood, but by the refined "citizenship" in another kingdom.

America is THIS new experiment, this new possibility that did not previously exist in historical memory. At St. Gregory's we are very conscious of the unique challenge that most of our American parishes face to place the deliberate emphasis on being nothing other than the local presence of the Body of Christ, above all other "preferences" that once marked particular parishes. Six years

Parish 50th Anniversary Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Rochester, NY by Fr. Ken James Stavrevsky

Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church was founded in Rochester, NY, on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women (May 17) in 1964. That year, a group of Orthodox faithful joined together with the desire to establish an Orthodox parish where the Divine Services would be conducted entirely in the English language. With the spiritual guidance,



unbounded inspiration, and material support of the late Father Alexander Warnecke, assisted by the late Father John Kozak (Saints Peter & Paul Church, Syracuse NY), they faithfully endured many difficulties and overcame obstacles; the parish grew and found a home at its current location – a truly inviting and lovely place of worship centrally located and easily accessible from the entire greater Rochester area. The parish has become an icon of Orthodox unity, representing a wide diversity of backgrounds: “cradle-born” Orthodox, converts from a multitude of religious traditions, and those “on the road” to seek Christ and His Church. Many faithful have been added to the Body of Christ through the enduring witness of Saint John parish.

The 50th Anniversary celebrations were held on the weekend of 17-18 May 2014. On Saturday, a celebratory banquet luncheon was attended by over 150 guests comprised of parishioners and friends. Joining the festivities and offering remarks at the banquet were: Bishop Michael, Father Thaddeus Wojcik (first permanently assigned parish rector, 1968-1975), and Father John Dresko (Rector, Saint Paul the Apostle Church, Las Vegas NV). Both Father Dresko and the current parish rector, Father Ken James Stavrevsky, are “sons of the

parish” who were not only present as altar servers for the first service 50 years ago but were also themselves celebrating their birthdays (age 7 and 10, respectively) on that very day.

Parish founding members, Jane Wargo and Boris Glus, welcomed all to the banquet on behalf of the parish family and offered toasts in memory of departed parishioners, and “Many Years” to present and future members of the parish. Sub-Deacon Sean McNulty, a recent graduate of the Diocesan Diaconal Formation Program, served as master of ceremonies as precious memories, affections of love, and sincere gratitude were expressed. The banquet concluded with remarks of thanksgiving for the past and a commitment to the future offered by the youth of the parish, represented by Lydia Haylaab (age 13) and Raphael Platte (age 12).

On Sunday, a joyous Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Michael. Serving with His Grace were: Father Stavrevsky, Father Wojcik, Father Dresko, Father Terenti Wasielewski (Saint Nicholas Church, Cohoes NY), Deacon Mark Hoeplinger (Saint George Church, Buffalo NY), Sub-Deacon Sean McNulty, and many parish altar servers. Exuberant responses, songs of praise and thanksgiving, were offered by the parish choir under the direction of Bonnie Maye Schwarz, assisted by Tanya Kantor Fletcher, Andrea Fedoruk, and Matushka Nadine Eskoff Brown. During the Liturgy, Charles Guthlac Cowling (parish assistant warden) was tonsured to the rank of “Reader” by Bishop Michael, joining Douglas Schwarz and Robert Mitchell VanDuyn as parish readers.

A festive fellowship/coffee hour followed the Liturgy as parishioners and friends rejoiced together in celebration. “Many Years!” to the faithful of Saint John the Baptist Church; and “Memory Eternal” to the departed founders, petitioners, and benefactors of the parish who – by their faith, love, dedication, and labors – established a foundation in Christ, upon which the 50th Anniversary has been attained and the future is yet to be built.

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*The Church's
primary task
is not to reveal
the meaning,
purpose or
goal of life; it
is rather to
reveal Christ
as Life, life in
abundance,
to those who
desire to know
the truth and
to live humbly
in purity of
heart.*

The Consecration of the Holy Transfiguration Cathedral of Our Lord, Brooklyn NY

by Barbara Helena Krawczuk

One of the oldest churches on the East Coast was consecrated after its complete restoration and renovation. On Saturday, May 3, 2014, His Grace Michael, Bishop of New York and New Jersey, attended the 6 p.m. Vespers service. After Vespers, the rector of the Cathedral, Archpriest Wiaczeslaw

with the relics of the new Holy Martyr Ignatius Bazyluk. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in English and in Slavonic.



Sunday, May 4 was also the day of the Myrrhbearing Women, the patron saints of our Sisterhood. After the Gospel, His Grace, Bishop Michael in his sermon compared the Sisterhood's actions to the Myrrhbearing Women, who with unconditional love give their time and talents to Christ. At the end of the service, the Bishop presented awards to the Church Council, and the contractors who renovated the church. Ann Kandratino, the President of the Sisterhood, was awarded with a *gramota* honoring all her work in the Sisterhood. Also each Sisterhood member received a special icon. His Grace Bishop Michael thanked everyone for all of the donations and for all of the wonderful work they have accomplished. Fr. Wiaczeslaw thanked His Grace Bishop Michael, all the clergy and servers who participated in the consecration. He also thanked the choir and all the loyal parishioners who attended the service.

Krawczuk, served a Panikhida for all of the founders and all of those who had participated in Church life. Hundreds of names were mentioned throughout the Panikhida.

Matushka Tamara Skvir, the granddaughter of former rector Archpriest Constantine and Matushka Melissa Buketoff, shared with us her precious memories. Matushka Buketoff founded our Sisterhood over 80 years ago and her spirit lives on in the Sisterhood.

On May 4, 2014, at 9 a.m., His Grace Bishop Michael began to consecrate the church with the assistance of Fr. Krawczuk; Archpriest Joseph Lickwar, Chancellor of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey; Archpriest Daniel Skvir, rector of the Holy Transfiguration Chapel in Princeton, NJ; Fr. Igor Yakunin from Transfiguration Cathedral, Brooklyn; and Protodeacon Paul Sokol from Saints Peter and Paul Church in Manville, NJ. His Grace led a procession around the church while blessing the exterior and the interior of the church with Holy Water. Inside, Holy Chrism was put on the walls at each of the cardinal points: north, east, south, and west. His Grace also consecrated a new Antimins

After the service, many people attended the banquet at Princess Manor to celebrate the consecration of the church. During the banquet festivities, a presentation, "We Love Our Church" was given by the students of our Church School. Following hours of dancing thanks to music by DJ Igor Sidoruk, everyone retired home with fond memories.

*The Theotokos is the personal icon of the Holy Spirit in human flesh.
She is the living proof that we are saved by faith and grace.
She is the perfect image of human perfection.*

The Resurrection of “Passion Week”

by Fr. Daniel Skvir

Holy Week 2014 took on a special cultural as well as spiritual significance for Fr. Daniel and Tamara Skvir of Transfiguration Chapel in Princeton. More than a decade ago, Matushka Tamara was entrusted with a special piece of music by her uncle, conductor and musicologist Igor Buketoff, and told that the music was “the next step beyond Rachmaninoff’s Vespers.” It had been created in the early 1920’s by Maximilan Steinberg, the student and then successor of Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakoff as chair of the composition department of the St. Petersburg / Leningrad Conservatory. Of Jewish origin, Steinberg evidently embraced Orthodoxy to marry Rimsky-Korsakoff’s daughter. The piece was published quietly in Paris in the late 20’s, and then all but forgotten, with no chance of it ever being performed in the Soviet Union. In the mid 50’s, Maestro Buketoff, founder of the International Contemporary Music Exchange, was given a copy of the work by Steinberg’s student, Dmitri Shostakovich, at a meeting in Philadelphia. It rested in obscurity, unperformed and known by only a handful of scholars. Buketoff’s instructions were “treasure it, and get it performed.” (He died in 2001.)

The piece is intricate, requiring a highly trained choir to tackle, so it took some time for the right circumstances to evolve. In 2012, Professor Alex Lingas, founder and conductor of *Capella Romana*, spent a research semester at Princeton University, faithfully attending services at the Orthodox Chapel. After one Vespers service, the Skvirs mentioned the piece and asked if *Capella Romana* might be interested. Professor Lingas spent a long evening studying the piece and doing some preliminary research on Steinberg, returning to Sunday Liturgy with great excitement at the prospect of bringing Steinberg’s *Passion Week* to light and life. After a year of additional research, including a trip to Saint Petersburg where he discovered Steinberg’s original manuscript, Lingas and *Capella Romana* performed the world premier of *Passion Week* in Portland and Seattle on April 11-12, the weekend of Palm Sunday.

The 26 voice *Capella Romana* (a minimum for the demands of the music according to Lingas) sang in two Roman Catholic cathedral settings, both with excellent acoustics. Attendance exceeded

expectations to the point that programs became a scarce commodity in Seattle. Dr. Vladimir Morosan introduced the concert with an excellent presentation explaining the historical significance of Steinberg and the piece in relationship to the early 20th century religious renaissance in Russia, and the spiritual nature of the eleven individual hymns, all chosen from the various familiar services of Orthodox Holy Week. Throughout the pieces, various familiar strains of Kievan, Znamenny, and Bulgarian chants were briefly recognizable within Steinberg’s more modern and dramatic musical augmentations.

The music was warmly received by both audiences as well as in the local and national press. One reviewer described it as “a profound confession of faith... involving complex harmonies, beautiful dissonance which flirts lightly and then resolves, producing a vivid, energetic yet melodious sound.”



L-R: Dmitry Kabalevsky, Igor Buketoff, and Dmitri Shostakovich

The presentation was highlighted nationally through an interview with conductor Lingas on many local NPR stations. Brett Campbell, the music critic of the *Wall Street Journal*, offered that “the entire *Passion Week*, which lasted about an hour, proved unexpectedly gentle, sometimes even lush, occasionally delicate, graced by intermittent dissonances and touches of counterpoint.” This critic mentioned that the piece deserved the attention of secular choirs as well as sacred Orthodox Church liturgical settings.

An integral part of the premiere performance of Steinberg’s *Passion Week* was the preparation of a new printed edition, prepared by Vladimir Morosan and *Musica Russica*. A compact disk of *Passion Week* will be recorded this summer, and should be available soon thereafter, thanks to the support of a generous benefactor.

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Spreading the Gospel in the Finger Lakes of New York

Many Christians today are seeking the first century Church. In the Lansing, NY area they are finding what they seek at Holy Apostles Church, a mission parish serving the Finger Lakes region of central New York.

The Apostles and the first few generations of disciples gathered in each other's homes to worship the risen Lord Jesus Christ. As these small communities grew, they began to erect beautiful churches and many newcomers flocked to them. This has been a model for the Orthodox Church for generations: several of the faithful come together, create worshipping communities, grow their presence in a place and become witnesses to Christ's love to their neighbors.

Holy Apostles Church is part of this tradition. What began as several friends yearning for a church of their own has blossomed into a community of some 40 members with its own dedicated (albeit rented) worship space, full education program and community outreach.

In August of 2010, an unused Roman Catholic church began its makeover into an Orthodox temple. Two icon panels were placed by the altar to act as an iconostasis, and the people sang from books that were created by the mission planting parish of SS. Peter and Paul in Endicott, NY. In the almost three years since then, we have seen the placement of a full-time priest, Fr. John Worthington and many new faces coming to the divine services (and social events!).

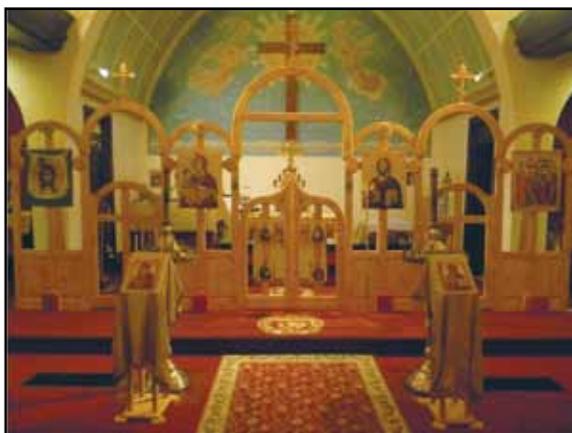
Through the sacrificial giving of its members and from supporters throughout the Diocese, funds were raised for an iconostasis. As an example of the faith and mutual love within this parish, the unfinished iconostasis was set up in Fr. James' garage to be sanded and stained. Almost everyone from the parish (and some other friends) came out

to attend to the work. This was a true community effort, showing the love and support we have for one another.

With the iconostasis placed into the sanctuary and some temporary icons affixed, we embarked on the next journey: raising more funds for new icons to place on the screen. Within a short amount of time, all of the icons were sponsored, and work has begun on the new icons. We see this project as an outgrowth of the faithfulness of the parishioners and the blessings of God on our mission parish.

Daily Services to Our Lord

The iconostasis is one visible manifestation of the beautiful spiritual community that is forming in Lansing. As part of our preparation for forming a new Orthodox community, we read in the Mission Planters Resource Kit: "For the Church to grow there are certain priorities, or prerequisites, that must be met. The first of these is not acquisition of new members. That comes later, and only if other spiritual conditions are met by the existing members. The first and most important priority is for each and every member to know God." Therefore, since very early in this community's life, services have been offered at least



six days a week. In addition to Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy on the weekends, Morning Prayers are offered Tuesday through Friday. All of the major feast days are celebrated, as well as liturgies on as many namesdays as possible. During the seasons of increased devotion, the opportunities for gathering around the Lord's table expand even further. This culminated recently in a very full Holy Week and Pascha schedule (which was heart-warmingly well attended). It is the belief of the missionary parishioners here that "liturgical services are not one of the 'aspects' of the Church; they express its very essence, are its breath, its heartbeat, its constant self-revelation," as Fr. Alexander Schmemmann has said.

We also come together for less solemn occasions. Last December, we held the Christmas Eve Holy Supper at the parish for the second time, and shared many traditional foods from the various ethnicities that are represented in the parish.

College Ministry

Holy Apostles is situated in an exciting part of New York State. On one side of the church is an old rural farming community with deep traditions and strong community pride. On the other is the progressive city of Ithaca with its two large colleges. Cornell University in particular has been one of the focuses of the ministry of Holy Apostles Church, with Fr. James acting as one of the chaplains of the Cornell OCF. This group has grown by leaps and bounds through the last two years. They now offer two lectures each academic year and host retreats for other area OCFs at St. Andrew's Camp in Jewell, NY. Additionally, they take their calling to provide service to the community very seriously. For two years now, they have collected supplies for the Advocacy Center, a shelter for battered woman and others in need; and they have volunteered at the local soup kitchen.

It is through the OCF that Holy Apostles has seen some of its growth throughout the last few years. Three students and a faculty member have been chrismated so far. These folks have added a depth to the community that makes us all thankful to God. This also leads to our greatest challenge as a community. With so many students being served by this parish, it is inevitable that many of them will move on to other places after they graduate. We pray to God that a steady flow of new students – both Orthodox and seekers alike – will find their way to Holy Apostles Church.

Hope for the Future

Throughout Great Lent, we speak a lot about the hope of the Resurrection to come. As Orthodox

Christians, our hope is in the guarantee that Christ Himself takes away the sins of the world. It is through this same hope, of His divine blessing and nurturing love, that we are happy to be the workers in the Lord's vineyard. To further this work, last December a building fund opened for our community. We did this so that when the community is ready to either build or purchase a temple of our own, we will be in a position to give our mission a permanent home to gather the prayers to our Lord.

There is great hope for the future of Holy Apostles Church, as the parishioners, the Diocese



of New York and New Jersey, and the Orthodox Church in America work to establish Orthodoxy in this place. A mission parish cannot be built solely through the few people in a distant location, or a small group left on its own. As a Christian family, we come together and use our God-given talents and material blessings to build up our brothers and sisters. It is through generous and sacrificial love that so much has been accomplished in Lansing – and so much more is yet to come!

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*The Church, in her scriptures, sacraments, services, saints and sufferings,
gives us a triune vision and experience of life in this world.*

*The three elements, never to be separated, are the "createdness" of the world
fashioned by God, the "fallenness" of the world brought about by the apostasy of
rational creatures, and the "redeemedness" of the world as saved, sanctified and
deified by Christ's voluntary passion on behalf of us sinners.*

Endicott Parish Celebrates 100 Years

by Dn. Simeon Peet

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Saints Peter and Paul Church in Endicott, NY celebrated its patronal feast and 100th Anniversary on June 29. The festive Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was served by His Beatitude, Tikhon, Metropolitan of All America and Canada along with our own



hierarch, His Grace Michael, Bishop of New York, and His Grace Mark, Bishop of Philadelphia. The hierarchs, ten priests, four deacons, and eight subdeacons were assisted by 22 altar servers. His Beatitude gave the homily and the choir was led by Professor Gleb Ivanov.

Gramotas were awarded to Robert and Rita Kushner, Allen and Elaine Costello, Nina Poltar, Anne Kolota, Maria Guryleva, and Norman P. Cross. The hierarchs were presented with red rose bouquets by the young women of the parish; a fourth bouquet of white roses was presented to former pastor, Fr. Yaroslav Sudick.

After the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy a Gala Centennial Banquet was held at the McKinley, in Endicott, NY. Thirty-six tables seating 236 people filled the venue. The program consisted of piano duets and trios by Gleb Ivanov, Lawrence Zoernig and Eric Grossman; addresses by Bishop Michael, three youths (Anna Darling, Jacob Pylypciw, and Gregory Fedorchak), former pastor Fr. Yaroslav Sudick, son of the parish Fr. Daniel Donlick, and Sunday School teacher Nancy Kulikowski; and the presentation of gifts to the three hierarchs.

A milestone anniversary presents an opportunity to take stock and to keep before us three critically important thoughts. First, we always give thanks to the Lord for everything. At the beginning of the Anaphora of every Divine Liturgy, which itself is an act of thanksgiving, we pray: "It is fitting (2 Thess. 1:3) and right to hymn You, to bless You, to praise You, to give thanks to You and to bow down to You (Mt. 4:10) in every place of Your dominion (Ps. 102:22). Second, everything that we do and have done is in Christ, with Christ, and for Christ, for apart from Him, we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). Third, we must be resolved to continue God's work in the vineyard He has given us, for the Lord's work is never done – it must be renewed from one generation to the next. This is not a time to sit on one's laurels, but to continue the work our forefathers in the faith began. May we be worthy of their love, labor and sacrifice, and may their love, labor, and sacrifice inspire us to keep the faith handed down to us from the Apostles.

The Choir of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ sponsored a joint concert on June 1, 2014 with the Northern Burlington County Regional High School Chorale to benefit Covenant House Camden. The choir has engaged several local high schools over the years in these benefit concerts (which usually include parish members - this year's featured Leo Weismantel).

Photo: Holy Cross Director, Josef Gulka, leading the Combined Choruses



Serving the Community in Trenton

As part of an on-going effort to bridge the gap between St. Vladimir Orthodox Church in Trenton, NJ and the surrounding community, the parish Church School sponsored and organized a field trip to the nearby Mercerville Nursing Home on Sunday, March 30, 2014 following the Divine Liturgy.

Eighteen students (from teenagers to toddlers), teachers, assistants and parents brought gifts, sang songs, told jokes, danced, read poems and played piano for 20 residents.

Each year the St. Vladimir Church School program engages in four service projects, one for the parish and one for the outside community both in the fall and spring, as part of its emphasis on stewardship.

During the visit, Fr. John Diamantis, parish rector, explained: "Our Orthodox Christian faith is one of experience. We experience God in our services and share that experience in service with one another. It is a blessing for us to share our love and joy of Jesus Christ with you all today."

After tapping and clapping along to the entertainment, one nursing home resident shared,

"This was really special for me, it made my day!" while another said "I'm not able to leave the nursing home, so to have entertainment like this and see all of the adorable smiling faces is really special for me."

To close the program the children sang the Lord's Prayer, "A New Commandment," and "God Bless America" before handing out small gifts of homemade snacks and mementos to the residents. Lisabeth Kasmer, age 9, was one of the dancers. She shared her pleasure with being involved. "I liked it, my favorite part was spending time giving out gifts to the people there. I want to do it again next year."

Ms. Dottie Kish, Church School Coordinator, said "I'm really glad we did this and I hope we do it again! The children really enjoyed themselves, and this is a memory they'll have forever."



ZOE for Life!

An Orthodox Christian Initiative

Founded in 1998, ZOE for Life! is a Christ-centered ministry that was created in response to the conviction that every life is sacred. It is focused around three major goals:

1. To help women who need confidential emotional and spiritual support during crisis pregnancies;
2. To assist Orthodox Christians seeking to adopt;
3. To provide an Orthodox Christian education for Pure Living and other resources.

ZOE's Board of Directors is comprised of women from four different Orthodox jurisdictions and has been granted 501 (c)(3) status by the Internal Revenue Service.

Christ has constantly sheltered this ministry, providing ZOE with life-affirming clergymen, lawyers, accountants, IT specialists and start-up

funding. When an identity was required, the Lament of Rachel icon came through the mail. ZOE for Life! has always been Christ's mission. It is humbling to consider that He accomplishes His will through this work.

ZOE will assist any woman in distress due to an unplanned pregnancy, regardless of her background. It created an Adoptive Parents Registry in the event that a woman agrees to carry her child to term, but cannot raise her baby. Only Orthodox Christians may register as prospective adoptive parents.

ZOE House was established in 2006 in Cleveland, Ohio. It was created as a model, offering a location for counseling, and physical necessities – everything from maternity clothing to diapers and wipes, cribs, car seats, and clothing for precious

*Spiritual life
in this world
consists solely
in how each
one of us deals
with what
we've been
dealt through
no choice or
fault of
our own.*

COMING HOME 3: Spirituality and the Returning Warrior by Fr. Daniel Degyansky

Introduction

Spirituality can be simply defined as that which gives a person meaning or purpose in his or her life. It is found in relationships with self, others, ideas, creation and God. These relationships are prioritized according to an organizing principle, and form a network that encompasses a person's sense of meaning or purpose. Spiritual distress arises when one of the relationships that provide purpose or meaning is threatened or broken. The more significant a particular relationship is, the greater the severity of spiritual distress if that relationship is threatened or broken. Trauma reactions are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances. Most reactions to exposure to combat trauma, be they physical, psychological, cognitive or behavioral, are best addressed by the healthcare and mental health communities. But there is also a spiritual dimension of reaction to combat trauma that should be addressed by the Faith Community. Spiritual wholeness is restored when that which threatens or breaks the wounded warrior's relational network of meaning is removed, transformed, integrated or transcended.

Theological

As Orthodox Christians we are blessed with a rich tradition of the Sacraments, our sacred narratives, hymnology, and theological constructs to address the needs of the returning warrior. St. Paul uses military terms (such as soldier, warfare, weaponry and armor) in many of his epistles. Yet never has the Orthodox Church presented nor accepted a theory of "just war," but has tolerated it to protect greater standards. While rejecting the "just war" theory, Church Fathers such as St. Ambrose and St. Augustine nevertheless recognized the reasons that lead to it – the defense of those unjustly treated. In the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, any act of violence contradicts the ethics and principles of the Kingdom of God. St. Basil stated that although the act of violence may be required for the defense of the weak and innocent, it is never justifiable, even if deemed necessary under certain circumstances to protect the innocent and to limit even greater evils.¹ Although St. Basil did not count the "shedding of blood" committed during

wars as murder, he did require the returning warrior to abstain from partaking of the Eucharist for three years.² Thus, the Church has always condemned war; but has always been tolerant of, and ministered to, those who have borne the burden of the battle.

Pastoral

War affects a soldier's well being, and makes it difficult for him or her to live in the everyday world. Returning home means returning to a place – a land, a community, a family, and a culture – that one is part of, a place with which one has a special relationship. The horror of war interferes with one's ability to be part of this place. It upsets the balance of life. This is why many cultures have special ceremonies or rites to help bring the soldier's life back into balance – to make it possible for the soldier to once again live in peace and to be physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally healthy. In the context of Orthodox Christianity, the first step should be for the returning warrior to connect with his or her Spiritual Father and engage in the process of repentance, confession and reconciliation. Remember: this is a process that will take time and effort on the part of the spiritual director, the returning warrior and the family. The Faith Community provides a safe haven for the returning warrior: a calm, safe and non-judgmental presence, free of anxiety. The Faith Community is accepting: acceptance means understanding the dark side of human nature without trying to fix the unfixable. Rather, acceptance offers a deep reflection on "what is goodness" and how to assist others in finding goodness within themselves. The Spiritual Father is there to listen: without interruption or comment, conveying warmth and acceptance of the veteran – their journey and their struggles. The listener avoids asking questions and does not freely offer advice or platitudes. Thus the Faith Community may assist the returning veteran in being grounded: providing a "roadmap" for re-integration through the Parish Community into the community at large.

Sacred Tradition

Our Sacred Tradition provides the foundation for a support team to provide practical, emotional

and spiritual support to returning warriors and their families. The list of Saints of the Orthodox Church includes those who not only faithfully served in the military in defense of the Roman Empire, but shone forth as exemplary soldiers. The problem arose when such warriors unconditionally refused to offer sacrifices to the deified emperor. Such refusal was met with accusations of treason and the ultimatum to either offer sacrifice to the emperor or face martyrdom. The hymnology and sacred texts of the Church are filled with a wealth of words that recognize the fallen state of mankind, encourage remorse and repentance for sinful behavior, and (most importantly) offer reassurance of God's forgiveness for the penitent. The sacramental act of preparation for and receiving the Eucharist is a very powerful step for the returning warrior: signifying God's forgiveness and loving embrace through preparatory Confession, reintegration into the Faith Community and culture, and the determination to continue the process of healing as long as is necessary.

Conclusion

In addressing the re-integration of veterans returning from deployment, the key lies in providing care at various levels for the returning warrior in the effort to inaugurate this process. Imagine a stone being thrown into a pool of water, and the concentric ripples of water that are created by such an action. The center of the concentric circles represents the returning warrior. The next circle from the center

Continued from page 27

little ones. All of these things are made available at no cost for the most needy. Freely ZOE has received, freely it gives. Last year, ZOE House served 400 families, a 100% increase from 2012. The hope is that others can emulate this initiative in their areas, learning from ZOE's years of experience.

If you believe that God loves you, and consecrated your soul when you were conceived, can there be any doubt of His love of every soul? How

is the spouse and/or family of the veteran. The third circle includes the care providers: medical, psychosocial and spiritual. The outermost ring of the circles is the community. In the realm of care, the motion is not from the center extending outward; but rather, the reverse occurs where the various levels of support gravitate inward, toward the center: the returning war veteran.

Notes

1. Canon 13 of St. Basil: Our Fathers did not consider the killings committed in the course of wars to be classifiable as murders at all, on the score, it seems to me, of allowing a pardon to men fighting in defense of sobriety and piety. Perhaps, though, it might be advisable to refuse them Communion for three years, on the ground that they are not clean-handed.
2. Although three years may seem harsh to us today, Fr. John McGuckin states that this was actually a commonly recognized sign of merciful leniency in the ancient rule book of the early Church.

Father Daniel Degyansky is the Rector of St. John Chrysostom Eastern Orthodox Church in Woodside. He is also a Board Certified Clinical Staff Chaplain, with special competencies in Hospice and Palliative Care, and serves at the James J. Peters Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx. This is the third and final segment of his series on ministering to the spiritual needs of Veterans.

then, can anyone simply stand by and do nothing, while His innocents are being destroyed? Be His light in today's world of darkness. Please visit our website at www.zoeforlifeonline.org, or call us at 440-893-9990.

Our Father is blessing this ministry. Thank you for your help by your prayers and support. God bless you for helping to save lives only He can create.

Nothing is more boring and useless than talk about "life after death" and "the soul going to heaven." The Gospel is not about "life after death" and "the soul going to heaven." It is rather the glad tidings of the great joy of the everlasting life in Christ given to the whole of creation that begins here and now in the Holy Spirit in the Church and is perfectly fulfilled in the age to come.

Jacob's well

Summer/Fall
2014

*The Church
is meant to
be the living
body of Christ
in the world
in which
it actually
exists.
Instead it is
all too often
the corpse of a
world that no
longer exists,
and perhaps
never existed,
except in the
fantasies of
men's minds.*

Outside of the sacramental, liturgical and ascetical life of the Church no one can know what being saved by faith and grace, and not by works, really means.

Is this What They Believe? Understanding the Spiritual Lives of Young People

by Fr. John Diamantis

In his 2005 book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, co-written with Melinda Lundquist Denton, Christian Smith introduced the term Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) to describe the common religious beliefs exhibited by American youth in a survey.

They label MTD as a religion with the following traits:

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

This study confirmed that these beliefs are prevalent among youth claiming to be Christian to no less a degree than people claiming affiliation with an alternative faith. Let's see point-by-point how these contemporary and wide-spread American beliefs relate to those of our Orthodox Christianity.

A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.

One's beliefs about God are of utmost importance. The belief that God does not exist (atheism) has powerful ramifications in one's life. Likewise, the deist (as in "moralistic therapeutic deist") believes that a god of some sort exists but is not involved in any direct way with our lives. To the extent that the MTD shares a belief in some god, we find commonality with our Orthodox Christian understanding of God. If we look beyond this, however, we see in Orthodox Christianity that God has always been in close relationship with His creation. The first commandment God gave humanity, "Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17), was heard clearly by man. The voice of God has been heard and His message proclaimed by the prophets throughout the millenia. When the Archangel

Gabriel announced to the Theotokos that she would bear Jesus Christ our Savior, God's relationship with man became more intimate. God made Himself more fully known still at His nativity in the person of Jesus Christ and He continues to make Himself known through the Holy Spirit.

The belief that God does truly exist and can really be known is a critical one for us Orthodox Christians to understand. If we cannot know who God is, then Jesus Christ is not God and our faith is in vain. Orthodox Christianity teaches that God does so much more than "watch over human life on earth." Our God is involved in intimate, real, powerful and majestic ways. "Ours is the God who works wonders" (Ps. 77: 13-14)!

God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

For sure, there exist societal elements in the Gospels about how we should treat one another (see, for example, portions of chapters 5 and 25 of St. Matthew's Gospel). However, this belief of the MTD falls quite short of an Orthodox Christian understanding. The Lord wants us to love Him and one another as He loves us. So, how exactly has God shown His love for us? He created us, became one of us, suffered, died, resurrected, ascended and continues to give the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel message – "Christ is risen!" does not focus on goodness. In fact, the Gospel message is so much more radical – Christ is risen for you and me despite the rarity with which we exhibit goodness, niceness or fairness. Moreover, this sentiment does not address the real issue of defining goodness. What is good to you may not be good to the other person, and what may be somewhat good here may be very good there. Without a divine standard, goodness, niceness, and fairness are all relative and subjective. To the Christian, "only one is good, God" (Mk. 10:18).

This whole deist idea underlies not just a naïveté, but a true absence of understanding about what Christianity is. Do you see the deceit and danger here? This is a slippery slope to atheism.

We see all around us instances of unfairness. If God wants us to be fair while abundant evidence of unfairness surrounds us, we are led to believe that God is nothing but an imaginary friend. Why would a God who wants fairness allow unfairness, after all? If God is nothing but fantasy we have nothing to rely on but ourselves and our own will, thereby supplanting God from His throne.

The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.

If the central goal of life according to God is to be happy, then nothing self-pleasing can be wrong, immoral, or illegal. The murderer can say, “I am happy murdering,” the rapist could say, “It pleases me to rape,” the thief can simply steal, and each will be justified in his action because each is pleased with his work and feels good about himself afterwards. It is true that not everyone will end up taking these paths – the point is that if my personal happiness is the standard, then anything goes, even if someone else doesn’t happen to like it.

It is fascinating that from a deist perspective our culture can manage to glean these particular “truths” about God’s will for us. How is it that all of society hears “God” saying “I want you to be happy” and “good people go to heaven” but not “take up your cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24), “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), or even “ask and it will be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7-8).

God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

The three preceding characteristics of the MTD are truly frightening when seen through a Christian lens. This fourth trait is saddening.

To say that “God does not need to be involved in one’s life” entirely misses the point that is emphasized by the Church in every service — you and I truly do need God to be involved in our lives, whether we admit there is a “problem” or not. The problem that we all face is sin and death (Rom. 3:23); it is for this reason that Jesus Christ truly must be involved in our lives at all times, not just when a difficult situation arises. When we relegate God to a “problem-solver,” we really turn Him into some kind of genie Who whimsically grants our wishes. God is not a genie, He is God; and we need Him, not the other way around.

When do we take the time to involve God in our lives? When do we initiate a conversation with Him? Do we pray and ask God daily to be with us? Do we say “O Heavenly King...come and abide in us...” each day? Do we stand before our icons at home and ask for guidance, strength, peace, or love for ourselves or loved ones? If so, do we mean what we say in these prayers? If we can answer “no” to any of this, we are behaving more as a MTD than an Orthodox Christian.

Good people go to heaven when they die.

The idea of heaven for the MTD is generally something like “a nice place I go when my body fails.” There is no understanding on the part of the MTD that heaven is the same for everybody, that is to say, being in heaven is being in God’s presence face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). What this means from an Orthodox Christian perspective is that everybody – Christians, atheists, Muslims, Hindus, Zulu Warriors – will be in the presence of God when the time has come. So doesn’t this mean that every person will be in heaven? No. What it does mean is that, whether we have prepared ourselves for it or not, the infinite purity of God’s unchanging love will be radiating upon us and if we carry sin at that moment we will be cast out, for “perfect love casts out sin” (1 Jn. 4:18), or that because of the spiritual callousness we have developed here, we will not be able to receive, accept or enjoy God’s love at that time. So, yes, we will all be in God’s heavenly presence at some point, but the person’s ability to enjoy that as heavenly rather than a “fire consuming the unworthy” depends on the relationship developed with God in this earthly life.

Conclusion

Essentially, this study points to the trend of making God more like “me.” The MTD degrades God into a fallen and sinful (albeit amicable) man. The point of our Orthodox Christian faith is not attaining happiness but holiness, not pleasantries but sanctity, not blending in with society but transforming society with godliness.

We Orthodox Christians are no less susceptible to the tentacles of MTD ideologies than anyone else. It is important for us to be grounded and well-versed in our true faith. MTD is just one more ploy to lure us away from our Savior. By His grace and love for mankind, may we always be steadfast in the beliefs given by “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Jacob's well

Summer/Fall
2014

*There is no
“other world”
than our
own. There
is only this
world saved,
purified,
transfigured
and glorified,
forever young
and new, in
the crucified
and glorified
Christ by,
through, for,
in and toward
Whom it was
created in the
beginning.*

*If we don't
find Life here,
we will not
find It there.
If we don't love
Life here, we
will not love It
there. And if
we don't live
Life here, we
will not live It
there.*

The OCA Pension Plan is For Real

Dependable! Important! Reliable! These words are mentioned repeatedly in conversations with OCA retired clergy. The topic is the Orthodox Church in America Pension Plan.

The Plan currently provides monthly benefits to more than 100 retired clergy and full time church workers. Fr. Paul Shafran remembers when the Plan started almost 40 years ago, and he is thankful that the Plan was available to him and his fellow clergy at that time. He encourages young clergy to look ahead and assure for themselves and their families the kind of financial security that comes from a plan that provides reliable monthly income.

Father Sergius Kuharsky feels that dependable income is extremely valuable later in life and expressed great satisfaction with Plan benefits.

Father Thomas Hopko said that having followed the participation requirements, he is now very pleased with his benefits in retirement. The personal and parish contributions that started as a new member and continued through the years are now providing him with important financial security.

Father Thomas, Father Paul, and Father Sergius encourage plan participation for new priests in the OCA based on their positive experiences.

The OCA Pension Plan is a defined benefit plan for OCA clergy and lay workers. Participants and parishes share in contributing 14% of compensation to the Plan on a monthly basis. At age 65 with at least five years of service, participants are eligible to receive a monthly benefit upon retirement. A participant who joins the Plan now will receive 2% of his monthly compensation per year for every year he contributes. For example, if he is paid \$4,000 per month for 15 years, at age 65 he would be eligible for a lifetime benefit of approximately \$1,200 per month ($\$4,000 \times 15 \times 2\%$). Of course, actual benefits are affected by many variables such as salary increases, periodic adjustments, or years of service. This example serves to illustrate the value of planning ahead.

In addition to regular monthly retirement benefits, close to 50 beneficiaries receive regular monthly payments as a result of careful advance planning by clergy and lay workers to assure financial income for their widows or dependents. Plan members who are unable to serve due to a disabling condition may be eligible for monthly disability income.

The advantage of the OCA defined benefit plan is that planning and decision-making is shared with the seven-member OCA Pension Board, elected at the All American Councils. The Board takes the fiduciary responsibility very seriously and meets regularly with nationally recognized legal counsel, actuarial professionals and investment managers. An independent CPA firm conducts the annual audit. Professional administrative staff manage the daily business affairs and are available to provide information and answer questions.

Since its inception, the Pension Board has worked diligently to maintain the security and health of the Plan for the benefit of all members. Benefits have been increased when the Plan had surpluses. Benefit calculations have been changed in response to economic and demographic shifts. The investment program was modified to reduce the risk of large losses. Most recently, the contribution rate was increased to hasten full-funding of projected benefits and to better enable the Plan to provide benefit improvements.

The OCA Pension Plan has been referred to as one of the best benefits offered to our clergy and full time church workers. Together with respected professionals and a dedicated staff, the Pension Board works to provide a secure future for participants in their retirement years.

To find out how you can join the OCA Pension Plan, please contact Maureen Ahearn in the Pension Office at maureen@oca.org or 516-922-0550 x142.

The Prodigal Son: *As Retold by Banks Sagnar*

John and Gabriel were two brothers born to a rich man by the name of James. He owned a successful electronics business. Since birth, John was the one who got what he wanted when he wanted it. If a new toy came out, he would get it as a birthday present no matter how many weeks away his birthday was. If he would misbehave, he would deliver apologies that would bring tears to a priest's eyes during confession. Now, as an adult, John was helping his father in engineering projects, putting things together and creating commercial banners. But since John was twenty-four, he desired to take off to live a life of his own, so he asked his father, "Dad, it is time for me to leave. Give me my share of inheritance now, so I can live my life, see the sights, visit museums, and have a family of my own." In fact, that was not John's intention. The father agreed and divided his estate between both his sons; then John set off for New York.

John was well known by bartenders and shop clerks for his wealth, because he spent massive amounts of money at once in bars and shops. He used his body as a storage tank for a bottle of whiskey, one day after another. When he had spent all of his money irresponsibly, he was kicked out of the hotel he was living in and was put out on the street. He used the little money he had from working at the local fast-food restaurant to purchase drugs. Because he was so low on food, he would sometimes hide a burger or two in his pocket on the way out. He became involved in various narcotics, such as cocaine and heroin. After an incident in which he acted violently toward another employee, his relatively large boss tackled him. Saving the other employee from injury, his boss turned from manager to drill sergeant and said, "The only way to prevent this from happening again is to throw you out! "You are fired!" Then John thought, "Even the cleaning lady has meals more divine than a McDonald's burger." After John was fired for being under the influence in the workplace, he stole a citizen's cell phone and called his father. "Dad,"

he said on the phone. "I spent all of my money on drugs and alcohol and other material possessions. I am now broke and wanted by the police." He then hung up and threw the phone into a fountain.

Not long after the conversation, John was arrested by the police and brought into custody. He called his father from the station and said, "Dad, I am currently at the station. I was charged with theft and possession of heroin, and I have been sentenced to five years in jail. I sinned against Heaven and you, and I ask you for forgiveness."



In court the next day, John was charged with possession of drugs and theft. To John's surprise, his father paid his bail and drove him home. John was honored, because usually his father would have hired a driver.

When they arrived at John's father's estate, John was approached by well-dressed servants holding a sport jacket by the sleeves and a white shirt by the collar. They dressed John and led him into the living room which had been decorated like a banquet hall. John was mesmerized looking at and analyzing the intricate carvings on the bright chandelier and the banner that said, "WELCOME HOME JOHN." The servants pulled a chair out from under the table and signaled him to sit in it. Two waiters came to him with two trays, which contained a fancily garnished roast beef and a garden salad. The loud and cheerful music and the tapping shoes of happily dancing couples were silenced when John's father got the attention of the crowd in the room by declaring into a microphone, "John is back. Let us celebrate!" A loud cheer shortly followed.

Gabriel had been typing up some documents on the first floor of the estate and was alarmed by rattling windows and loud cheering. Gabriel called his father into his office and said, "Why are you cheering for that mess of a person? He took your money and made you pay his bill and for three sessions of rehabilitation just to get him out of

Jacob's well

Summer/Fall
2014

*Why should
I talk about
"heaven"
(St. John
Chrysostom
asks) when
I myself
have become
"heaven"
through
the passion,
death,
resurrection
and
glorification of
God's Son in
human flesh?*

Continued on page 34

*The teaching
that the
symbolical is
not real, and
the mystical is
not true, is one
of the greatest
tragedies in
Christian
history.*

In Memoriam: Father John Bohush

The clergy and faithful of our Diocese were shocked and saddened to hear the news on September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, of the sudden falling-asleep in the Lord of the Reverend Presbyter + John Bohush. Father John served at SS. Peter and Paul Church in Endicott, NY, where parish Rector, Fr. Alexey Karlgut, refers to himself and his fellow clergy with humor as “simple village priests”.

Father John’s dedication to the priesthood was, indeed, simple: he did not seek awards or accolades, position or prestige. He sought only to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal – to share the joy and warmth he found in his faith and his family, with the people in the parishes he was sent to serve. Father John accomplished those things at home in Endicott ... and on lengthy assignments at St. George Church in Buffalo and at SS. Peter and Paul in East Herkimer, during difficult times when those parishes were without full time priests. Together with his beloved Matushka Joanna, Fr. John drove the many miles to those churches for weekends and feasts, commuting back and forth from his pastoral assignments to his professional commitments in Binghamton as a highly sought after computer software developer.

Father John was a joy and a delight to all who knew him. His spirit, personality, and good humor



allowed him to be one of those very “lovable” priests. He never had a bad word to say about anyone; he never participated in gossip or criticism. He combatted harsh words with gentleness, opposition with tolerance, anger with love. He was, in the words of the Scripture, a “genuine Israelite in whom there is no guile.”

At Fr. John’s funeral, His Grace, Bishop Michael, urged Matushka Joanna and their children John and Tatiana to share the story of Fr. John -- as devoted husband, loving father, faithful Christian, and doting new grandfather -- with granddaughter Natalia and the next generation of lives whom his warmth and compassion were just beginning to touch. More than fifty priests, deacons, sub-deacons and servers, together with hundreds of parishioners, colleagues, and loved ones, joined together at the services memorializing Fr. John, bearing witness to the impact of the love of this “simple village priest” on their lives.

Grant rest eternal in blessed repose with the Saints, O Lord, unto Thy newly departed servant, the ever-memorable Presbyter John, who is fallen asleep; and make his memory to be eternal! “Vechnaya Pamyat!”

Continued from page 33

punishment. I’ve been slaving in here, and I don’t get a party? It is not fair!” The father quickly replied, “Son, you do good work for me, and everything I have is yours. But celebration is necessary because your brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and now he is found.” Not listening to a word of his father’s reasoning, Gabriel stomped back into the office and slammed his hands on the keyboard. Inside the banquet hall, John ate his beef and made

conversations with the guests around him. He said, “I am very grateful because I was lost, and now I am found.”

(Banks Sapnar produced this retelling of “The Prodigal Son” as part of a teen church school class at the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ. The effort was guided by professional author, Margery Cuyler.)

Continued from page 36

“You have let a criminal in this church. Her husband lied to me. He chose to commandeer my money and she chose to disregard the obvious. He told me he was sick and bilked me out of money. Now when I ask her, she tells me he is a drug addict and tries to pay me back this measly payment.”

The Priest was so sad.

But Eris couldn't stop herself, she said, “You should stand up in front of the congregation and tell them there is a snake in their midst, her and her whole family. Then maybe you would be doing us a service. You help this...” A derisive look, “And give people like me neither the consideration nor simple courtesy of a warning.”

The Priest said, “Eris, how much we have been forgiven by Christ...” But she wouldn't hear it. Then he said, “Who knows? Maybe one day, you and I, maybe we will have a problem in our family. And someone will help us instead of announcing it abroad.”

“Never.” Eris said. “My family is not criminal. We are not low-life scum. I despise her and her ilk and her rabble kids.” She turned to leave saying, “I will be submitting a delineated request for payment. I will see you in court, both of you!” Eris was a pragmatist, savvy, wise in the way of devils and men. Nobody's fool.

...The one who is perfectly “at home” in this world and its life, who has never been wounded by the nostalgic desire for another Reality, will not understand...

Just then the parish treasurer came by. The Priest asked Eris, “How much?” She told him the amount she was owed. The treasurer said, “We have that in the poor-fund.” And Eris was paid.

The Priest realized that for now, the money was all Eris was capable of receiving. And he knew she needed it and deserved to be repaid. But not like this. How could this be good for anyone?

Althea said nothing. The Priest knew she'd been trying to keep her

family together in the face of her husband's problems... Two jobs, caring for the kids, keeping up with the rent, trips to doctors, and rehabs. Having to humble herself, a professional woman, and beg for help. Broken-hearted by the man she still loved. And every week, she, and her “rabble” kids, at church. She read the epistle in her language for the people. She sang in the choir.

Her husband had come to church only to trick Eris. And he did. He fooled the bread-eating Priest too. Yes, the Priest had given money. But Althea, he did not fool.

As they were singing the Priest found deep in the pocket of his cassock, a crunchy piece of last week's bread. It was dry. It had a nutty flavor, like in the Way of the Pilgrim. For some reason he liked antidoron dried.

He would call Eris later in the week. For now, he thinks she's okay.

Some things and people are better left to season for a while.

Choir voices accompanied him as far as the coffee-hour border where the incense meets the doughnuts. No looking back. Enter singing. Tripping on your cassock into that far and distant land.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, And yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

...the Psalm of exile ... has become forever the song of man as he realizes his exile from God, and realizing it, becomes man again: the one who can never be fully satisfied by anything in this fallen world, for by nature and vocation he is a pilgrim of the Absolute.

Jacob's well

Summer/Fall
2014

*The mysteries
of life are
never solved or
resolved; they
are rather
dissolved in
the grace and
glory of God in
the Crucified
Christ.*

PILGRIM OF THE ABSOLUTE

by Fr. Stephen Siniari

(Bold Print Quotes: *Great Lent* by Father Alexander Schmemmann)

A man who has never had that experience, be it only very briefly, who has never felt that he is exiled from God and from real life, will never understand what Christianity is about.

After the Divine Liturgy,
the Ark retains a certain Eucharistic peacefulness.
When the Church has been gathered up
into the Bridal Chamber of Her Master,
each candle lingers in its own halo of prayer
and gives the narthex-light a temple-hue.

Overhead a great cloud of witnesses
rises to the homeland of our heart's desire
and echoes like an antiphonal choir
in that longed-for day without evening.
But not everyone is touched to the same depth...

Two women stood in the back after Liturgy.
Eris berated Althea.
Scum. Crime. Filth. Slime.
Imagine, almost like a Dr. Seuss rhyme.

This scolding caused such a disturbance
in the noetic Angels ascending on the incense
that even the Priest coming from unvesting,
from consuming the Gifts...
tying up his cassock, eating antidoron,
descending down through the Deacon's Door..
- A rigorist wanted to know, North Door, or South?
- Even the Priest could tell, something wasn't right.
Althea was bent in shame in front of Eris.

He approached the two women hoping for the best.

For over a decade the Priest had appealed to the people,
"You are icons of a different Kingdom.
Bear with each other and forgive one another
if any of you has a grievance against someone,
Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)

Again and again he would say:
When we recognize that we are the church of the broken toys
that we share each other's sins
are on the same road
share – at one time or another – similar burdens
All lost children – strangers in a strange land
on the same mystifying pilgrimage
facing the same mystifying end...

Then we see that we must stop breaking each other – must help
each other
praying God will grant us strength to change from being all
about me...
Change in the way we relate to Him, to His creation, and to all
others
to love one another even as He has loved us especially when
things go wrong...

**...to realize suddenly that I have defiled and lost my spiritual
beauty, that I am far away from my real home, my real life,
and that something precious and pure and beautiful has
been hopelessly broken in the very texture of my existence...**

But more coals – Eris was furious.
She chastised Althea even more and then turned on the Priest.
"Don't talk to me about love, and forgiveness...Get with
reality!"

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Jacob's
well

Diocese of New York and New Jersey
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