

# The Orthodox Church



## OCA MISSIONS

PLANTING THE SEEDS  
OF FAITH



No. 472 ■ NOVEMBER 2006

## ■ EPISCOPAL CHANGES

**[FITZGERALD], Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West** is granted retirement by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and the Diocese of the West is declared vacant/ November 14, 2006.

**[SWAIKO], Metropolitan Herman** is appointed locum tenens of the Diocese of the West. All other duties remain the same/ November 14, 2006.

**[PETERSON], Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley** is appointed Administrator of the Diocese of the West by Metropolitan Herman/ November 14, 2006.

## ■ RECEPTIONS

**JARMUS, The Rev. Andrew** is canonically received into the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by Metropolitan Herman from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and attached to the Archdiocese of Canada/ November 29, 2006.

## ■ ORDINATIONS

**CASEY, Matthew** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South at Christ the Saviour Cathedral, Miami, FL. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri and attached to the Diocese of the South/ October 28, 2006.

**DEMKO, Deacon Michael** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern PA at St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, St. Tikhon's Seminary, South Canaan, PA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of Eastern PA/ October 22, 2006.

**ROYER, Deacon Robert** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Nikon of Boston, New England and the Albanian Archdiocese on behalf of Metropolitan Herman at Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ November 21, 2006.

## ■ ASSIGNMENTS

**ACTIVE, The Rev. Sergie** is released from duties at St. Herman Church, Port Graham, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**ALEXANDRESCU, The V. Rev. Lucian Liviu** is released from duties at Nativity of the Ever Virgin Mary Mission, Cambridge, MA and appointed pastor of Annunciation Church, Montreal, QC, Canada/ December 1, 2006.

**ALEXIE, The V. Rev. Phillip** is released from duties at St. Gabriel Church, Kongiganak, AK and St. Michael Church, Kwigillingok, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**ASKOAK, The Rev. Daniel**, in addition to duties at St. Nicholas Church, Nondalton, AK, is appointed priest-in-charge of Holy Transfiguration Church, Newhalen, AK. He will also service SS. Peter and Paul Church, Kokhonak, AK and St. Nicholas Church, Igiugig, AK/ November 1, 2006.

**ASKOAK, The V. Rev. David**, is released from duties at Holy Transfiguration Church, Newhalen, AK; SS. Peter and Paul Church, Kokhonak, AK; and St. Nicholas Church, Igiugig, AK. He is appointed rector of St. Seraphim of Sarov Church, Dillingham, AK/ Novem-

ber 1, 2006.

**BAR, The Rev. Romulus** is released from duties at St. Andrew the Apostle Mission, Brooksville, FL and appointed pastor of St. Stephen Mission, Clearwater, FL/ March 1, 2006.

**BROWN, Deacon James** is released from duties at Holy Dormition Church, Calhan, CO and attached to Transfiguration of Christ Cathedral, Denver, CO/ November 15, 2006.

**CASEY, Deacon Matthew** is assigned to Holy Cross Church, Fort Myers, FL/ October 28, 2008.

**[CHMEKO], Priestmonk Innokenty** is placed on loan to the Diocese of the West and will serve the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Menlo Park, CA. He remains attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery, South Canaan, PA. November 29, 2006.

**CHRIS, The Rev. Peter** is appointed priest-in-charge of the Nativity of the Theotokos Church, Chenega Bay, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**DANYLEVICH, The Rev. Vladimir** is released from duties at St. Sergius of Radonezh Chapel, Oyster Bay Cove, NY; transferred to the Diocese of Washington and New York and attached to St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC/ November 15, 2006.

**DEMKO, The Rev. Michael** is appointed acting rector of St. Basil Church, Simpson, PA/ October 22, 2006.

**DOSS, Deacon Brendan**, who was awaiting assignment, is attached to Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA/ November 15, 2006.

**FOSTER, The Rev. Justin** is released from duties at St. Peter the Apostle Mission, Jupiter FL and is granted a leave of absence/ November 13, 2006.

**FREDERICKS, The Rev. Michael** is released from duties at St. Herman Church, Larsen Bay, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**GUMLICKPUK, The Rev. Ivan** is released from duties at St. Herman Church, King Cove, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**HATRAK, The V. Rev. Michael**, in addition to duties at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Minersville, PA and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, St. Clair, PA, is appointed dean of the Frackville Deanery/ November 15, 2006.

**HENRY, The Rev. Peter**, who was awaiting assignment, is appointed acting rector of St. Peter the Aleut Mission, Lake Havasu City, AZ/ November 15, 2006.

**JARMUS, The Rev. Andrew** awaits assignment/ November 29, 2006.

**JOHNSTON, The Rev. Leonty** is released from duties at Holy Trinity Church, Kasigluk, AK. He is appointed rector of St. Peter the Apostle Church, Nikolai, AK and will serve SS. Constantine and Helen Church, Lime Village, AK/ November 1, 2006.

**KAPATAK, Deacon Prokopy** is released from duties at St. Seraphim of Sarov Church, Dillingham, AK and attached to St. Michael the Archangel Church, Koliganek, AK/ November 1, 2006.

**KASHEVAROF, Deacon Andronik** is released from duties at St. George Church, St. George Island, AK and attached to St. Innocent Cathedral, Anchorage, AK/ September 1, 2006.

**KNAGIN, The Rev. Alexei**, who was priest-in-charge,

is appointed rector of St. Michael the Archangel Church, Cordova, AK. All other duties remain the same/ September 1, 2006.

**KOPCHA, The Rev. John**, in addition to duties at St. Andrew Church, Mingo Junction, OH, is appointed dean of the Ohio Valley Deanery/ November 9, 2006.

**KRETA, The Rev. John**, in addition to duties at All Saints of North America Mission, Salisbury, CT, is appointed chancellor of the Diocese of New England. He is released from duties a dean of Missions/ November 1, 2006.

**KUOLT, The Rev. Damian** is released from duties at St. Peter the Aleut Mission, Lake Havasu City, AZ. He remains attached to SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ/ November 15, 2006.

**LARSON, The Rev. Elia** is appointed priest-in-charge of Holy Annunciation Chapel, Sitka, AK. All other duties remain the same/ June 1, 2006.

**LARSON, The V. Rev. Nicolai**, in addition to his other duties, will service the Orthodox Mission, Quinahak, AK/ November 1, 2006.

**MIKITA, The Rev. John**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of St. John the Baptist Church, Black Lick, PA/ November 9, 2006.

**NICK, The V. Rev. Victor** is released from duties at St. Seraphim of Sarov Church, Dillingham, AK and appointed rector of Orthodox Mission, St. Michael, AK/ September 1, 2006.

**NICOLAI, The V. Rev. Martin**, in addition to his other duties, will service St. Gabriel Church, Kongiganak, AK and St. Michael Church, Kwigillingok, AK/ November 1, 2006.

**[PIRUTA], Archimandrite John-Jacob**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Osceola Mills, PA/ November 9, 2006.

**RESIGA, The Rev. Michael** is released from duties at SS. Constantine and Helen Mission, Lilburn, GA and appointed pastor of St. Andrew the Apostle Mission, Brooksville, FL/ December 1, 2006.

**ROPITSKY, The V. Rev. Paul**, who is retired, is released from duties at Holy Assumption Church, Frackville, PA, and attached to St. Mary Church, Coaldale, PA/ November 14, 2006.

**ROSHAK, The V. Rev. Michael** is released from his duties at Christ the Savior Mission, Stafford VA and from the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman and the Diocese of Washington and New York; transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Nikon; and attached to the Diocese of New England/ November 30, 2006. He is appointed acting rector of Three Saints Church, Ansonia, CT/ December 1, 2006.

**ROYER, The Rev. Robert** is attached to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY/ November 21, 2006.

**SENYO, The V. Rev. Michael**, who is dean of Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA, is in addition appointed rector of the same cathedral/ November 14, 2006.

**SHERMAN, The V. Rev. Mark**, in addition to duties at St. Jacob of Alaska Mission, Montpelier/Northfield Falls, VT, is appointed dean of Missions of the Diocese of New England/ November 1, 2006.

# The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church [ISSN 0048-2269] is published bimonthly by the Orthodox Church in America, PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675.

Periodical postage paid at Brentwood, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675.

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Metropolitan of All America and Canada  
Primate of the Orthodox Church in America

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### SUBSCRIPTION/CIRCULATION OFFICE

**Subscriptions:** \$30.00/year US, \$40.00/year elsewhere. Subscription requests and changes of address should be sent by e-mail to [lydia@oca.org](mailto:lydia@oca.org), by calling 516.922.0550, by sending a fax to 516.922.0954, or by writing to the following address.

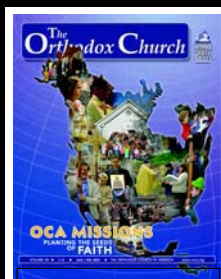
TOC Circulation Office  
PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675

The Orthodox Church clearly identifies official statements and positions of the Orthodox Church in America. All other materials represent the viewpoint of their authors and should not be interpreted as expressing the policy of the Orthodox Church in America or The Orthodox Church.

Printed by TSO General Corporation, Brentwood, NY 11717.

## Our Cover

The OCA Church Planting Grant makes it possible to continue the mission started in 1794 by planting dozens of new communities across North America.



Cover design by John Mindala

# In This Issue

VOLUME 43 | 1/2 | JAN/FEB 2007

- 2 What happiness it was!** Remembering Fr. Schmemmann.
- 5 The freedom to choose** Was Judas free to betray or remain loyal to Jesus?
- 6 Contemporary Christian Classics** Fr. John Meyendorff: Ecumenism: A heresy?
- 7 Torture in the womb** Speaking about it is politically incorrect.
- 8 Archpastoral Message of Metropolitan Herman on the Sanctity of Life**
- 9 Recovering a vision of Christ in our lives** The essence of Great Lent.
- 10 Making mud pies out of mud puddles** Taking the Mystery of Confession seriously.
- 11 Pages from our past** St. Alexander Hotovitzky
- 12 OCA News, Notes, Notices**
  - Holy Synod, Metropolitan Council hold joint meeting; appoint investigative committee.
  - Reorganization task force, search committee, begin their work.
  - Faithful proclaim sacred gift of life.
  - 2007 *Sourcebook*, *Desk Calendar* available on-line.
  - Youth department expands challenge to help Mexican Exarchate.
  - FOCA basketball tourney to be held April 20-22.
  - Mexican faithful welcome Metropolitan Herman, Archbishop Dmitri.
  - Metropolitan Herman attends funeral of President Gerald Ford.
  - 15K Christmas stockings, gifts distributed though 2006 project.
  - Nativity message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman
- 17 Planting the seeds of faith** The OCA annual mission appeal.
- 26 North America**
  - SCOPA hierarchs appeal for Archbishop Jovan's release.
  - SCOPA agency launches 24/7 internet radio.
  - OCA priest hosts daily internet broadcast.
  - After a decade, St. Innocent Orphanage is a model for Mexico.
- 29 World briefs**
  - Death of priest in fire highlights hard lives of Russia's rural clergy.
  - Date set for ROCOR-MP reunification.



## FEATURES

- 2 Official**
- 4 Editorial**
- 5 Wisdom**
- 13 In Depth**
- 18 In Memoriam**
- 20 Defending the Faith**
- 22 Gray Area Q&As**
- 30 Opportunities**
- 31 Communities**

## TOPICS

- 16 Mission Possible**
- 19 Evangelization**
- 20 Youth & Young Adults**
- 22 Christian Ed**
- 23 Chaplaincies**
- 24 Discipleship**
- 25 Church Arts**

## Truly Orthodox and American

**F**ather Alexander Schmemmann, writing some 30 years ago about Orthodoxy in America, observed that our task is to be “truly Orthodox and truly American.”

At the end of last year, I participated in a candid and wide-ranging conversation on the subject on the state of Orthodoxy in America. One of the other participants made the observation that the emphasis on being truly American may be the priority for those who see the immigrant story as their family point of entry into America, while for those who have family histories deeply rooted in the American past and in the origins of America, and came to Orthodoxy as converts, the emphasis is on being truly Orthodox.

At either end of this equation, it is possible to use this theme as a mutual “put down,” as a way of feeling superior to the other and questioning the motives of the other. The dialogue last year was not like this at all. It seemed to me that it opened a useful conversation, and invited reflection.

At the end of the 18th century, Orthodoxy comes to North America through the missionary work of Orthodox monks from Russia. Towards the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, conditions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East bring many Orthodox people to the New World. In the 20th century, many Americans unconnected to the Orthodox cultures and immigrant stories find the true faith in the Orthodox witness to the Gospel and become members of the Orthodox Church. In all of these dimensions of Orthodox experience, America and Orthodoxy encounter one another in a living and mutually challenging way.

Father Alexander’s formulation – “truly Orthodox and truly Ameri-

can” – invites us to go beyond polarity and division. In his vision, to be Orthodox and to be American is simply to be faithful to the Christian mission as given to us by Jesus Christ through the apostles. Orthodoxy and America are not in contradiction to one another. Orthodoxy is not nostalgia about “another time” and “another place.” America challenges Orthodoxy to come out of self-isolation and its tendency to self-absorption and to fulfill its calling to bear witness to the Gospel in every culture, to be present here and now. Finally, to be truly Orthodox and truly American is to be free to challenge America and its powerful and often self-absorbed culture.

The challenge to be truly Orthodox and truly American is not addressed primarily – and certainly not only – to the individual member of the Orthodox Church. Our concern is about the vision and mission and orientation of the Church herself. Is the life of the Church both faithful and dynamic in the effort to be truly Orthodox and truly American? Or is Orthodoxy for us a self-evident, self-enclosed, private spiritual world which we enter from time to time as a refuge from the pressures of America? Is America a self-evident culture and set of values determining our “real” day-to-day life and not requiring any reflection on our part in reference to the values of the Gospel and the truths of our Faith?

While giving priority to the vision, mission, and orientation of the Church, each one of us has a responsibility personally to live up to the Church’s vocation and calling. Thus, when the influence and impact of our personal stories adds up to an emphasis either on being “truly Orthodox” or on being “truly American,” we are called to be open to correction. In a profound way, the vision and mission of the Church becomes the vision and mission to which we are faithful. ■

## What happiness it was!

*Fr. Alexander Schmemmann’s Journals, first published in English translation by St. Vladimir’s Press in 2000, appeared in a fuller Russian edition in 2005. Since then, they have had a remarkable reception in Russia from believers and non-believers, priests and laymen, who have reported discovering in the journals a source of inspiration and guidance and a reaffirmation that a strong faith is entirely compatible with a full life. Last fall, I ran into Grigory Yavlinsky, a Russian politician and economist and founder and leader of the Yabloko Party, at a conference in Italy, and he described how strongly the journals had affected him. I asked him to put it in writing, which he has, together with the journalist Tatiana Morozova.*

– *Serge Schmemmann*

**“W**hat happiness it was!” This is the final entry in Father Alexander Schmemmann’s diaries, written shortly before his death. This acceptance of life, this understanding of life is where one finds true faith; a total confession of faith to the end. This is what we need today as never before: a word of such power and sincerity that it becomes a deed.

Father Alexander Schmemmann never was in Russia, but his presence was felt in the most important moments of our life.

At the end of the 80s, many people – my friends among them – started seeking a way to faith. Churches were reopening, thousands of people were being baptized. In the heat of the moment, there was even talk of a religious rebirth of Russia. This was perhaps the most powerful and the purest quest for truth, in many ways intuitive and internal, in a nation that could not bear to remain under the long pall of lies. A thirst for truth filled even the political life of the country, even if only for a brief time, with strong moral purpose.

Today it is hard to imagine how few such books there were then, how hard it was to find them, how avidly they were devoured! For many here, Christianity began with the words of Father Alexander. His books were passed from hand to hand; they were discussed. When priests felt a serious

interest in questions of faith, they said, “Read the books of Father Alexander Schmemmann.”

Today an interlocutor such as Father Alexander is simply critical. And in his *Journals*, published by *Russkii put’*, we find just that critical word for today. This word is “not for slaves, but for friends” [John 15:15].

People who thought they were moving toward Christ ten to fifteen years ago now find themselves with a very complicated religious life. Much in the church is unfamiliar, unacceptable and confusing, and only raises more questions. These people urgently need a pastoral word that would explain what’s what; a word that would erase doubts, support faith; a word that would draw a sharp line between the search for Christ and manifestations of religious life that not only can shake, but even destroy the beginnings of faith.

One always reads diaries with apprehension, and the diaries of a priest even more so. But the journals of Father Alexander demonstrate a form of life and thought that cannot be seen as “appropriate for the moment;” this is that *daily Christianity* that we never knew, that we do not know, and in which we do not know how to live.

The diaries of Father Alexander seem entirely ordinary – talk of books, authors, his relations with his wife (where husband and wife are indeed *one flesh*), his children, students, his views on world events, nature, holy days, the joys of life – “an almost pathological intensity of life, of youth, of happiness.” But here is where these diaries are unique – and everything is in this: They are a living revelation of faith, and not just talk about it. In a certain sense this is a contemporary witness to Christ that is in no way inferior to any fiery profession of Christianity.

To a Russian person, given either to internal collapse or external brow-beating, such a *normal* life is largely unfamiliar. The life of Father Alexander demonstrates that normalcy in which what is most important is living faith.

It is precisely this faith that does not allow one to be content with a happy family, books, thoughts about God. Against the backdrop of an ordinary life, a painfully clear sense of the ulcers of contemporary religious



# WISDOM

## from the Fathers

# That's the Spirit

Father Vladimir Berzonsky

### Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

Those words, however, in which He says, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, but you were not willing" [Matthew 23:37], make clear the ancient law of human liberty; for God made man free from the beginning, so that he possessed his own power just as his own soul, to follow God's will freely, not being compelled by God. For with God there is no coercion; but a good will is present with Him always. He, therefore, gives good counsel to all. In man as well as in angels – for angels are rational – He has placed a power of choice, so that those who obeyed might justly possess the good things which, indeed, God gives, but which they themselves must preserve.

Those who have not obeyed will not be found worthy to possess the good, and will receive deserved punishment; for God did kindly bestow the good upon them, but they did not guard it carefully, nor regard it as something precious, but were contemptuous of His most eminent goodness.... God, therefore, has given good... and they who work with it will receive glory and honor, because they have done good when they were able to do otherwise. But those who do not do it will receive God's just judgment, because they did not do good when they were able to do it. ■



Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, He said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me." They were very sad and began to say to Him, one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord!" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him had he not been born." – *Matthew 26:20*

## The freedom to choose

This is the moment Leonardo da Vinci lifted up in his famous painting of the Last Supper. Yet his painting, along with all western paintings of that event, missed the poignant contrast between love and betrayal. We learn from Saint Luke's gospel that even on that very night the apostles had been arguing with one another over priority of placement in their ranks [Luke 22:24]. Peter, the acknowledged leader, was

seated out of hearing range [John 13:24]. John the Beloved was next to Jesus, probably on His left side. The honored place at the right hand of Jesus was set for Judas Iscariot, since Jesus would be leaning, reclining, on His left elbow, freeing His right hand for eating. And for dipping into the same bowl as Judas.

He surmised for a time that He was losing the loyalty of Judas. For all His divine attributes, Jesus needed only the basic human insight most of us possess when we sense that somebody close to us is no longer responding to the affection sent from our heart. As He was taking the opportunity to win back Judas' affection, we marvel at the intensity of God's love for human beings, as Saint Paul described regarding Jesus: "Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the nature of a servant" [Philippians 2:5].

Jesus loves intensely. Not just humanity in general, as we all say we do; but each human being as though he or she were the only person God had created. And He loved Judas, whom we have a tendency to revile. Yet He never ceased loving him, even when He was aware of Judas' ignominious betrayal for a mere amount one would pay to return a slave to his owner.

Would we appreciate Jesus more if He had demanded some satisfaction there among His group of apostles? Had He exposed Judas openly, rising dramatically and pointing His finger at the door, expelling the traitor, our instinct would be to identify with the human need to maintain one's pride and dignity. But Jesus had no need to demand human satisfaction.

Was Judas free to betray or remain loyal to Jesus? Or was he the pawn of God, like an actor in a Greek drama whose role was fixed from the start? In other terms, was he destined to betray Jesus from his birth, or even before? The answer: He was clearly a free human being. Part of being human is to share the gift of freedom – indeed, an aspect of being made in the image of God. Had he not betrayed the Master another might have done so, or perhaps His enemies would have searched out another method for getting to Him, and getting Him in the end. Nevertheless, the gospels make clear how Jesus tried to save Judas from his fate. In the end Judas refused to respond to the Lord's love. Even then Jesus, knowing his decision was final, told him, "what you are about to do, do quickly" [John 13:27]. Spare yourself even more agony over your ignominy. When Judas left the meal, John's gospel relates, "It was night" [John 13:30] – the darkest night the world has ever known. ■

Protopresbyter  
John Meyendorff

## Ecumenism: A heresy?

*This editorial, which appeared in The Orthodox Church in January 1973, still delivers a timely message.*

**M**any signs indicate that the participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement has entered a critical period of rethinking and readjustment. The reasons are various and even contradictory.

On the one hand, the various ecumenical agencies (which are not to be confused with the ecumenical “movement” as such, and which will be defined below) frequently promote, by majority vote, positions which are clearly irreconcilable with the Orthodox faith. The rights of the Orthodox minority are, of course, protected, and the decisions are not binding upon the Orthodox, but an articulate Orthodox witness becomes more and more difficult. On the other hand, in Communist countries – particularly the USSR – the State seems to have returned to Stalinist religious policies which tended to isolate the Church from foreign influences, and curbs upon the Church’s ecumenical activities have become apparent. Finally, a very vocal minority among Orthodox churchmen is virulently critical of ecumenism in general, while some hierarchs and theologians make statements of “ecumenical progress as usual,” seemingly ignoring the real situation both in the ecumenical agencies and in the Orthodox Church.

If we believe in the Church as the Temple of the Spirit of Truth, we cannot doubt for a second that proper guidance will be given to us in this confused situation. However, as we all know, the will of God for us must be discerned by the whole body of the faithful. This discernment requires a spirit of humility and faith, and a patient effort of clarification. We need to undertake this effort without further delay.

The Orthodox have always believed – and have said so at ecumenical gatherings – that the Orthodox Church is the One Church of Christ to which Christ promised that “the gates of hell will not prevail against it” [Matthew 16:18]. This promise of Christ would be meaningless if the Church were to be “divided.” Thus, we believe that the “oneness” of the Church is still with us – in Orthodoxy. However, the Orthodox Church has also recognized the sincerity, the devotion, the Christian achievements of non-Orthodox Christians: those who invoke the Name of Jesus Christ cannot be considered as foreign to Him and thus foreigners to His Church, especially when they are sincerely ready to listen, to search, to seek unity in Christ. Their quest, their challenge to us, their witness to the non-Christian world cannot leave us indifferent.

The ecumenical movement has always been understood by the Orthodox as an opportunity for dialogue with the non-

Orthodox in which the true unity in Christ and where it really lies would be discovered by all – in Christ and His One Church, which, as we believe, is the Orthodox Church. As long as ecumenism makes such a dialogue possible, it is an obligation for all Orthodox Christians, who are called by their Master to “love their neighbors.” Unfortunately, contemporary organized ecumenism is often based on completely different principles: the wrong assumption that “it does not really matter” what we believe; the presupposition that any strong conviction harms the work for unity; and even the idea – which is either naive or blasphemous – that unity will be found when we all cease to debate matters of faith and will rather commit ourselves jointly to social or political causes, as if the latter were not by definition divisive and, in any case, of temporary and often questionable importance.

The distinction between a “good”

**Classics to 30**

**F**ather John Meyendorff was born in France in 1926. He completed studies at the Sorbonne in 1948 and at Paris’ St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute the following year. In 1954, he received a Diplôme de l’école pratique des Hautes Etudes and, four years later, a Doctorate of Letters.

He was an assistant professor at Saint Sergius’ and a fellow at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. In 1953, he helped establish *Syndesmos*, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, and served as its first general secretary.

After his ordination to the priesthood, he became professor of Church history and patristics at Saint Vladimir’s Seminary in 1959. He also served as lecturer in Byzantine theology at Harvard University and Dumbarton Oaks, professor of Byzantine history at Fordham University, and adjunct professor at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. From March 1984 until June 1992, he served as dean of Saint Vladimir’s Seminary.

Father John served as chairman of the Orthodox Church in America’s Department of External Affairs, editor of *The Orthodox Church*, and advisor to the Holy Synod of Bishops. He also served as president of the Orthodox Theological Society of America and a number of other organizations, and was very active in a number of ecumenical agencies.

Among his many books were *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, *The Orthodox Church*, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity*, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, *Byzantine Theology*, *Marriage, an Orthodox Perspective*; *Living Tradition*, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*, *Catholicity and the Church*, and *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*.

In May 1990, he was named an honorary member of the Leningrad Theological Academy. The following year, he was awarded the Order of Saint Vladimir by His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow.

Father John died on July 22, 1992, just weeks after he retired as dean of Saint Vladimir’s Seminary. ■







Metropolitan Herman and Bishop Tikhon lead faithful in 2007 March for Life in the US capital.

# Torture in the womb

**Father John Breck**

**T**orture evokes for most of us feelings of dread, anger, and loathing, responses based at least in part on the fear that it could happen to us or to someone dear to us. Because of today's headlines, the word "torture" itself calls up images of an Abu Ghraib prison, or the beheading of a Nick Berg, or the "necklacing" of some unnamed victim of Africa's internecine wars. For some people, the term brings back acutely painful memories of childhood abuse at the hands of a demented parent or some satanic cult.

There is another form of torture, sanctioned by this country's legislation, that receives far less attention, because to speak of it is politically incorrect. Yet it is the most widespread form of torture used in this country, and it needs to be recognized and named for what it is. I'm speaking about the torture associated with various forms of mid- to late-term abortions.

More than thirty years ago, Justice Harry Blackmun of the US Supreme Court declared: "the word person as used in the 14th Amendment does not include the unborn." This opinion, enshrined as law by *Roe v. Wade*, greatly facilitated the rush toward convenience abortions by the subtle message it conveyed. If a "fetus" (as distinct from a "child") is not a "person," then presumably that fetus is devoid of personal characteristics, including the capacity to feel pain.

Pro-life people tried to sensitize the public to the truth of the matter by a variety of means, such as the film *The Silent Scream*, and graphic descriptions of saline abortions. It was all to no avail. The American public has accepted abortion as a normal feature of its cultural life, including the procedure known as "partial-birth"

abortion. As we must all certainly know by now, this involves rotating the pre-born, full-term infant; drawing the body, feet first, out of the birth canal so that only a portion of the head remains "unborn;" then stabbing the back of the child's head to make an opening, so that the brain can be vacuumed out and the skull crushed. In this way thousands of babies are killed each year, although reputable witnesses, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, have declared that there is never any medical need for such procedures. It is nothing other than a legally sanctioned means to rid oneself of an unwanted child. In other words, legally sanctioned infanticide.

At the beginning of June 2004, the media reported the decision of US District Court Judge Phyllis Hamilton, holding that the congressional ban on partial-birth abortions was unconstitutional. She argued, against prevailing medical opinion, that there is no clear evidence that a child experiences pain as a result of the procedure. And she added that the question of pain is "irrelevant," presumably because the laws allowing it give no consideration to the issue of pain, but focus entirely on the "rights" of the mother to end the life of the child growing within her.

One pro-life media source, [www.lifenews.com](http://www.lifenews.com), noted what can only be regarded as an appalling irony: "Hamilton said the issue of fetal pain is also not germane because unborn children may feel greater pain in other abortion procedures such as 'disarticulation abortions' – where the baby is dismembered."

Does a newborn infant feel pain? Does a child in the womb feel pain? The answer should be self-evident, if for no other reason than the fact that a pregnant woman often feels the child's reaction to her own stress. And the monitoring of children who

## Torture from 7

are being aborted shows undeniably that they experience acute pain throughout the procedure, that is, until they are dead. Imagine yourself (or your child) being torn literally limb from limb, until some vital organ is destroyed and the agony finally ends.

This is ugly stuff, I realize. It is bound to provoke a hostile response on the part of pro-choice people and some bitter anguish on the part of women who have undergone an abortion. I very much regret adding any distress to the many women who are suffering what is known as “post-abortion syndrome.” And I readily acknowledge that there are times when a woman simply cannot bring a conceived child to term, when her only recourse is to abort. (As has often been remarked, many “pro-choice” women in fact have no real choice whatever in deciding to end their pregnancy.)

But for too long we have kept silent about this entire question. During the past few years, pro-life concern has focused almost entirely on embryos, primarily because of the dispute over harvesting embryonic stem cells for therapeutic purposes. Embryonic life is certainly human life, and it needs to be respected and protected to the fullest extent. Yet the nervous system is not integrated before about the eighth week after fertilization. This means that the embryo feels no pain.

This is not the case with a developing “fetus” – a child growing in the womb. The principle of protecting embryonic life must unquestionably be preserved and defended. But more important is protection extended to a sentient being, in this case a child who can feel pain and fully experience the consequences of being torn apart or having scissors thrust into the back of his or her skull.

The moral standing of a society is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable members, particularly the very young and the very old. If American society considers the pain suffered by a child during an abortion to be “irrelevant,” then we have sunk to the level of barbarism. It may be irrelevant given the laws we allow on the books, and it may be irrelevant to those who profit most from the abortion industry. But it cannot be considered irrelevant by anyone with a moral conscience.

It is time, then, that we broaden our attention and speak out loudly and clearly to legislators, medical professionals and others who shape public opinion. It’s time we look reality in the face, acknowledge what we are doing to 1.3 million unborn children each year, and – while we beg God’s forgiveness and healing for our moral blindness – work in our parishes, in our homes, through pro-life organizations and in our legislatures, to end what has rightly been called the “abortion holocaust.” It’s time we hear the Gospel command to offer our “little ones” to Christ: not as victimized cadavers, but as living, prosperous, secure and cherished bearers of His divine image. ■

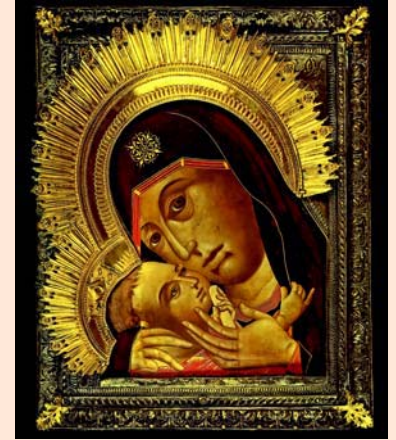
**Fr. John** chairs the OCA Medical/Ethics Commission.

## Archpastoral Message of Metropolitan Herman on the Sanctity of Life

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we gaze upon the icon of the most Holy Mother of God and our Savior, we are reminded of the truths in which our faith as Orthodox Christians is rooted: the One Who is Life Itself emptied Himself and took on our human nature, that we might become partakers of His divine nature.

The Holy Virgin gave birth in time and space to the eternal God, Who came into the world to free us from sin, death, and corruption. He took on our human nature to transform us, to reconcile us to the Father, and to restore in us all that had been lost through the devil’s deceit. All creation rejoiced, as we sing during the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, as God “made her body into a throne, and her womb more spacious than the heavens.”



The icon of the Mother of God, however, reveals another truth. The Mother of God tenderly embraces her Son, caressing Him as He clings to her. Like all mothers, she protects her child from every harm and danger. She reassures Him with the same maternal love every mother offers her child. Recognizing Him as God’s greatest gift to the world, she lovingly and selflessly accepts her duty to defend this precious gift of Life Itself, regardless of the costs or consequences.

Sadly, the culture in which we live seems to have forgotten that life is a gift from God -- the very God Who all too often is not acknowledged as the Source of Life, if acknowledged at all. Abortion on demand, branded as a “human right,” remains the law of the land and a blatant denial of the very image of God in which all human life is created. Hastening the death of the elderly or terminally ill under the deceptive guise of “pain management” and “death with dignity” is hardly an isolated event today. Sacrificing human life in the name of freedom or as a means of “protecting” society from “criminal elements,” has become an accept fact. The very thought of life as a sacred gift and the possibility of repentance is shunned outright among the “enlightened,” who deem any connection whatsoever between creation and its Creator as “politically incorrect.” Our society trumpets its commitment to ensuring “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Yet we, as people of faith, cannot blind ourselves to the fact that society has not only embraced the “culture of death,” but has sadly perfected it -- at the expense of those created in God’s image, not the least of which are the millions of innocent unborn children upon whom the death penalty has been proclaimed for no reason other than they exist.

I call upon you to join me in praying that our society, like the prodigal son, will come to its senses and experience a collective repentance. Let us pray that everyone, from civic and religious leaders to common citizens, will bravely denounce the culture of death that surrounds us, and embrace life – in the womb, beyond the tomb, and at every point in between – as a sacred gift from God that must be protected by all means. If we, as people of faith, truly believe that we possess the fullness of revealed truth, then it is our duty – rather, our divine calling – to proclaim, in our words and deeds, the truths of which the icon of the Mother of God and Our Savior reveals to us. We cannot wall ourselves off from the society in which Our Lord has planted us. While we are not “of the world,” as Saint Paul reminds us, we are nevertheless “in the world” -- just as Our Lord, in the very midst of the world, proclaimed its salvation.

May He Who is Life Itself open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, and our lives to His presence in this world, and may He strengthen us to proclaim the precious gift of life that finds its life in Him.

With love in Christ,

**+ HERMAN**

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



## Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South

# Recovering a vision of Christ in our lives

## The essence of Great Lent

**T**he Great Fast, or Lent, begins with Forgiveness Vespers on Sunday, February 18 this year. The purpose of Lent for Orthodox Christians, simply stated, is to recover the vision of Christ that was given to us when we first became children of God at baptism, our birth from above, of water and the Spirit.

From the beginning, this “spiritual recovery” has been an essential part of the life in Christ and the Lenten season for two reasons.

First, having been baptized into Christ and having put our faith in Him as the only Savior of us all, we find ourselves living in a world that has standards and goals not compatible with our calling as His disciples. We often end up living like pagans, with corresponding cares and concerns, and we consequently try to serve two masters, God and mammon.

Second, at the end of Lent is Pascha, the celebration of Christ’s resurrection and of our own death, burial, and resurrection, for “we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” [Romans 6:4]. We “are also risen with Him” [Colossians 2:12]. Baptisms, since the Church’s early days, were administered on the eve of Pascha.

Everything that we became responsible for as children of Christ’s Kingdom is carefully reviewed and meditated upon during our preparation for the fast. Whatever of the prodigal son remains in our lives, because we have not given “the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard... and let them slip” [Hebrews 2:1], must be repented of. And we must repent with the confidence that on returning to our loving Father, we will be received with open arms.

The first announcement that the Great Fast is approaching comes on the fifth Sunday before it begins. The theme of recovering the vision of Christ is brought to the attention of the faithful in the story of Zacchaeus the publican in Luke 19. The meditations for the day focus on the desire to “see Christ, Who He was,”

and not some “Christ” of our own making. We hear of Zacchaeus’ overcoming every obstacle to that vision and his resolve to transform his life once he had been in Christ’s presence.

This is the vision that Christians must recover, and we are reminded that once we have acquired it, we must keep it. “If a man love me,” says the Lord, “he will keep my words” [John 14:23]. We must see Jesus only, and not have competing masters. When the apostle speaks of “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” he teaches us to see no other if we would run the race of this life and reach the goal of our calling, life with Him in His eternal Kingdom [Hebrews 12:2].

Fasting is emphasized during Lent, but the question is sometimes raised, “Is fasting really necessary? Hear the words of Christ Himself: “When ye fast...,” He said to His disciples, not “if ye fast.” And He told the Pharisees: “The days will come, when the

Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days” [Luke 5:25]. Just as Christ did not do away with the law of tithing when He accused the Pharisees of omitting the “weightier matters of the law – judgment, mercy and faith,” neither did He abolish fasting, although He knew that some Christians would misunderstand and abuse the practice.

The fasting prescriptions for Lent in the Orthodox Church have not been modified to suit the spirit of the times. They are not, however, understood to be rules, the violation of which is a sin to be confessed; each person is responsible for what he is capable of and proposes to do. Fasting is not a work that gains merits for us. But it does bring enormous benefits, as the experience of the saints has demonstrated.

The radical change of diet must be a sign of an inner transformation. If there is no consciousness of the need to transform ourselves according to the pattern of Christ, the fast is useless, perhaps even harmful. On the other hand, the fast can help

us to bring about the mastery of the spiritual man over the material. Fasting must never be divorced from the pursuit of the spiritual life.

At the beginning of the fast, a hymn at Vespers summarizes our intent and reminds us of our goal: “Let us set out with joy upon the season of the fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit, may we persevere with love, and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and with great spiritual gladness to behold His holy Passover [Pascha].” ■



**Let us flee from the pride of the pharisee, and learn humility from the publican’s tears!**

Larissa Rodger

## Making mud pies out of mud puddles

### Taking the Mystery of Confession seriously

**H**aving just come from the Mystery of Confession, and feeling cleaned, renewed, and strengthened, I am wishing that Great Lent could begin today. Today, by the grace of God, I am ready for the battle to begin, having put on His armor of light.

Confession doesn't always have this same effect on me. Mostly, the thought of this Holy Mystery strikes terror in my heart. Where to begin? How specific do I need to get? How can I possibly say *those* things out loud? This is so embarrassing!

Intellectually, I know that the Lord knows it all anyway. Therefore, one would think that it shouldn't be such a big deal, making one's confession. Recounting my misdeeds out loud in time and space, on the other and, makes it all glaringly obvious that I have fallen short of the glory of God. Sin is ever so much easier to live with if I refuse to acknowledge it; ignore it; pretend it did not happen; justify it; tell myself that I'm a good person, so it's okay since I'm trying my best and that's what matters; luxuriate in it; or am not even aware of it.

Confessing one's sins out loud, while heeding the injunction given at the beginning of confession – "Beware, lest you depart unhealed" – doesn't allow sin to remain hidden. This is a very good thing too, because it's the hidden splinter that festers and becomes a full-blown systemic infection. Expressing our choice to turn away from sin, and affirming our desire to "become the best possible person that God wants me to be," is what the Mystery of Confession is all about.

There is an oft-told allegory of monks, on their way to salvation. The secret of their journey is in their persistence: they fall down, pick themselves up, and continue on their way, over and over again.

Well, I don't know about those monks, but I have a habit of falling – with quite a splash! – into the mud puddle of sin. It's not that I'm not aware of this proclivity, and therefore am not on my guard. On the contrary, I do keep watch and pray, especially about certain temptations. My hip waders are on, my overcoat

buttoned to the neck. I'm not going to be sullied by this mud-puddle again, nosiree!

However, from time to time, the enemy of our salvation sends the mother of all mudpuddles my way, cloaked deceptively in innocuous, innocent, everyday life. Or, perhaps, I've undone the overcoat a little (complacency: "Gee, it's really dry on this stretch of the road"); dared to bare my toes in sandals (pride: "I've made it this far unscathed, so I must have conquered *that* sin"); left my hipwaders at home (laziness: "Can't be bothered, because it's such a nice day anyway").

When I was preparing to be received into the Orthodox Church, the priest warned me about sins repeating themselves. In my pride and arrogance, I thought that the point of repentance and confession was that they wouldn't repeat. How could they, if true repentance the 180-degree turnaway from the sin, had taken place?

Today, some 20-odd years later, I confessed the same old thing.

The struggle, the battle to be lifted from the quicksand hidden in my particular mudpuddle, is not accomplished without divine intervention, witnessed and prayed for by the confessor. In this, as in all things, we are saved through community. The priest, hearing the confession, is the witness for the whole community. Our sins, committed in isolation, affect the whole world – and our repentance likewise. We cannot be isolated in our confession ("I'll just go for a walk and tell God all by myself") because we are healed through communion, in all sense of the word. The act of confession in particular has special power to bring us farther along the road to salvation.

Today I asked the priest if I could exchange this particular mudpuddle for another. I am so

very weary of dealing with this one over and over again. I feel that because this temptation is ever with me, that I am somehow lacking; that I am either doing something I ought not to do, or am not doing something that I should do, in order to be rid of it.

Unfortunately, there is no magic formula for me to follow. Just as some people have an affinity for country music and others for Mozart and Bach, so too do we each have our own particular type of mudpuddle to fall into. No doubt there are other sins that we commit, "willingly or unwillingly, in knowledge or in ignorance," but there will always be our own particular stumbling block. Our fathers and mothers of the Church became saints through their persistent efforts, often with major struggles against one temptation in particular. We are certainly not alone, nor unique, in this.

It is important to realize that the journey of Great Lent is not

**Confession to 30**





Alexis Liberovsky

## St. Alexander Hotovitzky

Alexander Hotovitzky was born in 1872 in Kremenetz, Volhynia province, in what is today Ukraine. His father, an archpriest, was rector of the Volhynia seminary. After graduation from this seminary, Alexander was accepted into the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy, where he completed his studies in 1895. During his senior year at the academy, he and his friend and classmate, John Kochurov, attracted the attention of Bishop Nicholas [Ziorov] of the Aleutians and Alaska, who visited the academy to recruit graduates interested in pursuing missionary service in America. Both young men agreed to serve in America after their graduation.

As Alexander was not yet married, he was initially assigned psalm-reader at New York's Saint Nicholas Church. After his marriage to Maria Scherbuhina, he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood in February 1896, and soon appointed rector of Saint Nicholas Church, then located in modest temporary quarters. Shortly after Saint Tikhon succeeded Bishop Nicholas in late 1898, it was decided to construct a permanent church building in New York. Under Father Alexander's leadership, the new church was completed and consecrated on November 10, 1902.

With the transfer of the North American diocesan see from San Francisco to New York in 1905, Saint Nicholas Church became the diocesan cathedral and the episcopal offices and residence. Here, Father Alexander worked ever more closely assisting Saint Tikhon and his successor, Archbishop Platon [Rozhdestvensky], in administering the diocese. Both hierarchs greatly appreciated his intelligence and organizational skills. As Saint Tikhon's closest collaborator, he played a key role in the preparation and convocation of the First All-American *Sobor* [Council], held in Mayfield, PA in March 1907.

Father Alexander also was instrumental in planting many parishes in the north-

eastern states, often traveling to fledgling communities to celebrate services until permanent priests could be assigned. On one such journey, he was severely beaten at a train station in New Jersey by uniate sympathizers opposed to the establishment of a local Orthodox parish. His missionary work included assisting immigrants from Russia and Austro-Hungary in their resettlement in America. He actively participated in the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Catholic Mutual Aid Society and became its president.

As founding editor of the *American Orthodox Messenger*, the official bilingual journal of the North American Orthodox Diocese, he was the voice and chronicler for the diocese during his 18 years in America. He wrote extensively for this publication, including lengthy detailed articles on significant events and issues in the Church in North America. Additionally, he advised Isabel F. Hapgood in producing her English translation of the *Orthodox Service Book*, widely used to this day. His multifaceted ministry attracted converts to Orthodoxy from the unia and the American public at large.

In 1914, he was reassigned to Dormition Cathedral in Helsinki, Finland, then part of the Russian Empire, where he worked closely with Archbishop Sergius [Stragorodsky], the future Patriarch of Moscow. He established and edited a periodical similar in format and style to the *American Orthodox Messenger*.

On the eve of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Father Alexander was appointed assistant dean of Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral. He was an active participant in the historic All-Russian Church Council in Moscow in 1917-18. Due no doubt to his eloquent writing and speaking skills, he was selected to deliver a congratulatory address on behalf of Christ the Savior Cathedral at the enthronement of the newly elected Patriarch Tikhon, the former hierarch of North America. He drafted condolences on behalf of the Council announcing the tragic murder of his friend, Father John Kochurov, the first clergy martyr of the Russian Revolution, soliciting material support for Father John's grieving family. He also eloquently spoke in favor of translating the liturgical texts into Russian, citing the fruitful use of the local language by Orthodox Christians in America and other lands.

In the face of the Bolshevik persecution of the Church, Father Alexander served as an advisor to Patriarch Tikhon and, through his own ministry, courageously protected the Church. He was a leader of the Christ the Savior Cathedral brotherhood, which worked to safeguard the Church's property and valuables and to assist Moscow's needy. For his actions, he was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned throughout the 1920s. He ardently defended those who were accused and tried with him, seeking to lessen possible civil penalties against them. While the state closed the Moscow Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral, he was named its honorary dean in 1924. He was soon exiled to Siberia, but upon his return to Moscow in 1928 he was raised to the rank of protopresbyter, an extremely rare honor for priests of that era.

**Our Past to 14**

**St. Alexander Hotovitzky** was a leading priest and missionary during his 18 years of ministry in North America and Finland. Upon his return to Russia in 1917, he endured many years of persecution and suffering until his death in a Stalinist death camp in 1937. His glorification took place in 1994. The 135th anniversary of his birth is celebrated on February 11 of this year, while the 70th anniversary of his martyrdom is commemorated on August 19.



# OCA News Notes Notices

## Holy Synod, Metropolitan Council hold joint meeting; appoint investigative committee

The extraordinary joint meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and the Metropolitan Council was held on December 12-13, 2006.

Called in response to a growing number of concerns with regard to the Church's finances and related matters, the meeting opened with an address by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman.

Among the agenda items was the long-awaited investigative report of the legal firm of Proskaur Rose and a report from the outside auditors.

"Stunned by the magnitude" of the report's revelations, members of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council named a special committee to continue the investigation. Appointed to the committee were His Eminence, Archbishop Job of Chicago; His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley; the Very Revs. Vladimir Berzonsky and John Reeves; Mr. Gregory Nescott and Dr. Faith Skordinski.

A report by the reorganization task force was unanimously accepted for implementation. The new structure calls for a division and sharing of administrative responsibilities among the chancellor, secretary, treasurer, and director of ministry and communications, all of whom will report directly to the Metropolitan. The change allows for increased professionalism and shared responsibility, fostering openness and mutual accountability. A search committee was appointed to initiate a search for interested and qualified candidates for the four full-time positions, as well as for the position of comptroller.

It was noted that the new structure will provide clear reporting channels and job descriptions for all chancery personnel. Further, the number of central administrative employees will be reduced, resulting in an anticipated \$500,000.00 decrease in staff expenses.



**Metropolitan Herman** opens the joint meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council.

John Mindala

Metropolitan Council members established a charity committee, to be chaired by the Very Rev. John Reeves, to recommend priorities for the allocation of existing charities and the identification of future charitable projects.

At their September 2006 meeting, Metropolitan Council members also established finance, audit, and investment committees.

Metropolitan Council members appointed the Very Rev. Philip Reese to chair the investment committee, while Mary Caetta, MBA, was named chair of the audit committee.

The transmittal of \$10,000.00 to His Grace, Bishop Alejo, for the general support of the Exarchate of Mexico was also authorized by the Metropolitan Council.

The 2007 budget, designed to be "real" promptly posted on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).

and balanced, was thoroughly examined. The budget was drafted by the finance committee, chaired by the Very Rev. Matthew Tate. Several new initiatives indicated the desire of Council members to maximize spending on programs, such as the seminarian summer internship program. The 2007 approved budget was promptly post-

ed on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).

In other actions,

- Attorney James Thomas Perry spoke on and clarified "A Review of Director Liability Standards."
- it was announced that the previous long-standing Metropolitan Council Administrative Committee positions have been vacated.
- the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council agreed that time constraints would make it impossible to convene an All-American Council in 2007. The AAC will be convened in 2008, as previously announced.
- the Metropolitan Council authorized the sale of the property on Martin Drive in Syosset, formerly used as the home of the OCA chancellor.

The meeting closed on December 13 with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the feast of Saint Herman of Alaska. ■



## Reorganization task force, search committee, begin their work

**M**embers of the Orthodox Church in America's reorganization task force began their work in earnest at the end of 2006.

Task Force members include Robert Kornafel, chair; Peter Bohlender, Marty Brown, Al and Carol Wetmore, and Deacon John Zarras. Protodeacon Peter Danilchick serves as an advisor.

At the joint meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council December 11-13, 2006, the search committee was established under the task force's aegis. It was charged with receiving, evaluating, and recommending suitable candidates to fill the full-time positions of chancellor, secretary, treasurer, comptroller, and director of ministries and communications.

Serving on the search committee are Peter Bohlender, Mary Caetta, Michelle Jannakos, Bob Kornafel, Gregory Nescott, Eleana Silk, Dr. Faith Skordinski, the Very Rev. Matthew Tate, the Very Rev. David

Vernak, Dr. Richard West, Al Wetmore, and Deacon John Zarras.

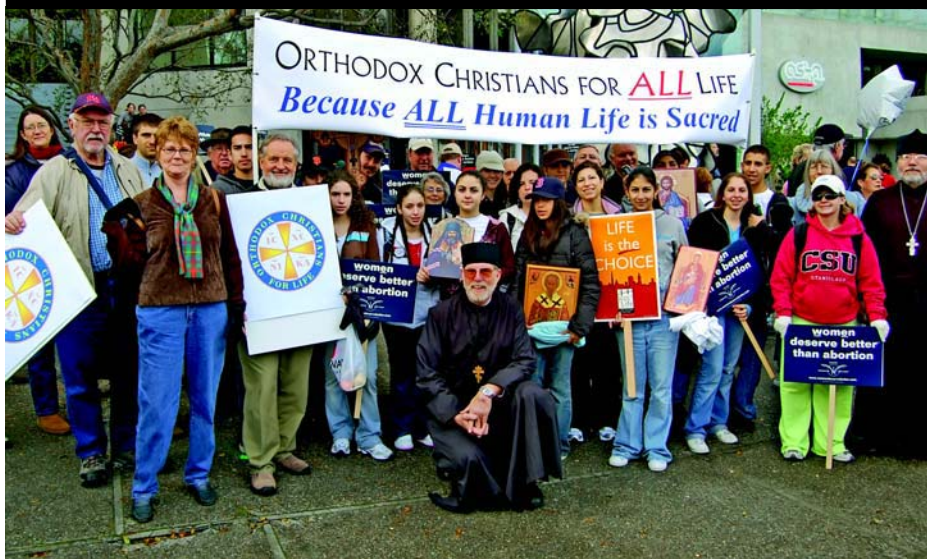
As the OCA's transition officer, Deacon John oversees the reorganization of the Chancery office. He is serving on a voluntary basis.

Task force members have established a clear process, guidelines, and time-line for filling the five Chancery-based positions.

"The objective of the recruitment process, as endorsed by the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council, is to provide the opportunity to as many dedicated and talented faithful as possible to offer their leadership skills for the building up of the Orthodox Church in America," according to Deacon John. "The vision is to create a unified team that acts together in coordinating and implementing the mission of the Church. This prayerful search process will occur with that vision and objective in mind." ■

## Faithful proclaim the sacred gift of life

Hundreds of Orthodox Christians joined Metropolitan Herman and Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia at the annual March for Life in the US capital on Monday, January 22, 2007. One day earlier, west coast faithful, pictured below, marched in San Francisco. Faithful in other cities and towns around the country also participated in numerous pro-life gatherings marking the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion. ■



## IN DEPTH

**S**ince space does not permit publication of the many reports and statements issued in recent weeks, we are providing this directory to ease in the location of resources on the OCA web site.

- ✓ **READ** the **statement of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council** outlining the **Proskaur Rose report** and **establishing the special investigative committee** at [www.oca.org/News.asp?ID=1125&SID=19](http://www.oca.org/News.asp?ID=1125&SID=19).
- ✓ **READ** the **opening address of Metropolitan Herman** at the **joint meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council** at [www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1124&SID=19](http://www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1124&SID=19).
- ✓ **READ** the **time line** the **reorganization task force** and **search committee** are following at [www.oca.org/PDF/news/2007/01.04.07.recruitmenttimeline.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/news/2007/01.04.07.recruitmenttimeline.pdf).
- ✓ **READ** the **2007 approved budget** at [www.oca.org/PDF/news/BUDGET20062007.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/news/BUDGET20062007.pdf).
- ✓ **READ** the **job descriptions** for the five full-time Chancery positions at [www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1145&SID=19](http://www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1145&SID=19).
- ✓ **READ** the **"Findings, Actions, and Recommendations"** of the reorganization task force at [www.oca.org/PDF/news/12.20.06.taskforce.pdf](http://www.oca.org/PDF/news/12.20.06.taskforce.pdf).
- ✓ **LOG ON** to [www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1143&SID=19](http://www.oca.org/news.asp?ID=1143&SID=19) to read
  - **Metropolitan Herman's statement** appointing **Deacon John Zarras** as the transition officer.
  - the **charter** governing the **future activities of the reorganization task force**.
  - the **process** that the task force and search committee are following to fill five full-time Chancery positions.
  - **brief biographies** of task force members. ■

## 2007 Sourcebook, Desk Calendar available on-line

The 2007 edition of the Orthodox Church in America's *Sourcebook and Church Directory* is now available in downloadable PDF format on the OCA web site.

For the second year, hard copies will not be available, saving of thousands of dollars in printing and mailing expenses.

The *Sourcebook* features complete listings of OCA Chancery offices and personnel, dioceses, parishes, monasteries, seminaries, other institutions, clergy and parish clergy and personnel. A directory of departments, commissions, offices, publications, and other agencies is also included.

The 2007 *Desk Calendar* is also available in PDF format. Both publications are available at [www.oca.org/DOC-PUB-index.asp?SID=34](http://www.oca.org/DOC-PUB-index.asp?SID=34). ■

## Youth department expands challenge to help Mexican Exarchate

The Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries, which issued a challenge to parish youth groups to collect icons for the faithful of the OCA's Mexican Exarchate, it expanding its challenge to include used vestments, altar server robes, and other liturgical items.

"The response to date to our 'icon challenge' yielded thousands of icons," said Deacon Joseph Matusiak, department chair. "Requests are now coming in for used vestments and other liturgical goods."

Items should be sent to the Rev. Antonio Perdomo, who is graciously coordinating delivery to Mexico, at 704 West Sam Houston, PO Box 667, Pharr, TX 78577-0667. Photos of parish groups undertaking this project should be sent to [yyadept@oca.org](mailto:yyadept@oca.org) or [info@oca.org](mailto:info@oca.org). ■

## New planned giving resources now available

A variety of new resources on planned giving is now available on the OCA web site at [www.oca.org/PGindex.asp?SID=5](http://www.oca.org/PGindex.asp?SID=5).

Resources include a calculator to help individuals determine how their gifts can affect taxes, timing, value, etc. A number of informative e-brochures and other relevant articles are also available to assist potential donors. ■



## Mexican faithful welcome Metropolitan Herman, Archbishop Dmitri

Bishop Alejo of Mexico City and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America's Mexican Exarchate welcomed Metropolitan Herman and Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas, Exarch of Mexico, January 6-8, 2007.

The hierarchs were delighted to visit with the faithful after the Liturgy they concelebrated in Ascension Cathedral and at a number of other gatherings.

Concurrently, Fr. Antonio Perdomo of McAllen, TX, delivered dozens of boxes of icons donated by US and Canadian parishes in response to the OCA youth department's Church-wide drive. ■

### Our Past from 6

## St. Alexander Hotovitzky

In the 1930s, Father Alexander served as rector of Moscow's Church of the Deposition of the Robe. During this period, he wrote extensively about the Jesus Prayer. This manuscript has been lovingly preserved by his spiritual children.

He was arrested in Moscow and executed by firing squad on August 19, 1937.

Acting on an official request of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, the Council of Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church issued decrees proclaiming the glorification of Saints Alexander Hotovitzky and John Kochurov.

On December 4, 1994, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius, concelebrated the Glorification Rite and Liturgy with His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow, in Moscow's Dormition Cathedral – the last celebratory event of the bicentennial of Orthodox Christianity in North America.

Saint Alexander's life presents a dynamic example of ultimate witness and service to Christ, and his ministry reflected many concerns that we in today's Church continue to address.

For more information on Saint Alexander visit [www.oca.org/FS.NA-Saint.asp?SID=4&Saint=Alexander](http://www.oca.org/FS.NA-Saint.asp?SID=4&Saint=Alexander). ■

**Alexis Liberovsky** is the archivist of the Orthodox Church in America.

## FOCA basketball tourney to be held April 20-22

**PITTSBURGH, PA** – The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America [FOCA] will host its annual basketball tournament here April 20-22, 2007.

Sponsored by the North Suburban "O" Club, games for teams of all ages will be played at area schools, while housing will be available at the Marriot North, Cranberry Township, PA.

Participants need not be FOCA members. For additional information please contact Mary Wusylko at [mwusylko@zoomineternet.net](mailto:mwusylko@zoomineternet.net) or 724/935-5423. ■



## Metropolitan Herman attends funeral of President Gerald Ford

**H**is Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, was among the numerous American religious and civic leaders who were invited to attend the funeral of US President Gerald Ford at the National Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Washington, DC on Tuesday, January 2, 2007.

In a letter sent to Mrs. Betty Ford, Metropolitan Herman expressed condolences on behalf of the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America.

The text of Metropolitan Herman's letter reads as follows.

"On behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops, the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, I wish to extend our sincere condolences on the passing of your beloved husband, President Gerald Ford. Please accept our expression of heartfelt sympathy and prayerful support during this time of loss.

"President Ford's service to the people of this nation was truly exemplary and will be gratefully remembered for many generations to come. The manner in which he lived his life, with integrity and uprightness, is an example to us all. His acceptance of these past years of illness is yet another testimony to his character and personal strength.

"Please know of our prayerful support in this time of great personal loss. You are to be commended for providing this nation with an example of how to accept suffering and how to graciously provide loving service in a dignified manner, without question and without complaint.

"Although I was present for the funeral service at the National Cathedral, I did not have the opportunity to speak to you personally.

"Be assured of our prayers for President Ford, the newly-departed servant of God. May the Lord grant him rest with the saints and make his memory to be eternal!" ■

## 15K Christmas stockings, gifts distributed through 2006 project

**N**early 500 parishes, FOCA chapters, youth groups, and individuals donated nearly \$53,000.00 to the 13th annual Christmas Stocking Project organized by the Orthodox Church in America's Office of Humanitarian Aid.

According to Mrs. Arlene Kallaur, project coordinator, over 700 Beanie Babies, donated by several individuals, also were distributed with the goodie-filled stockings and equivalent gifts to needy children in Albania, Belarus, the Republic of Georgia, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Mexico.

Clients from the Help for Retarded Children agency, Freeport, NY, assembled the stockings, while OCA members John Korello and Warren Brunke masterfully handled the strapping of the boxes. The Very Rev. Stavros Strikis blessed the boxes before they were shipped.

"Youth projects to raise stocking funds again united parishioners in good fellowship and stewardship," said Mrs. Kallaur. "Food"



**Fremont, CA**  
Hamburgers topped the luncheon menu at St. Christina Mission.

### Broadview Heights, OH Teens held a Halloween brunch, complete with costumes!



children and teens from Saint Nicholas Church, Norwich, CT, sold paper stockings

onto which the name of the purchaser was written. The stockings lined the walls of the church hall, inspiring others to join the effort. The parish council of Saint John the Baptist Church, Edwardsville, PA, decided to tithe the proceeds of their annual food festival for the stocking project.

Leading this year's donors was Holy Resurrection Church, Clinton, MS.

"Every donation, small and large, was so important to accomplishing another successful year of bringing smiles to little faces and joy to many hearts," said Mrs. Arlene Kallaur. ■

### Norwich, CT Fr. Jason Vansuch with "St. Nick's helpers," who sold stockings to generous parishioners.



# MISSION possible!

## Mission grows from zero to 85 in four years

Bev Cooke

In August 2002, Father John Hainsworth and his family arrived in Victoria, British Columbia. While they only knew two people there and had been given four phone numbers, they had a vision: to plant a church.

Father John celebrated his first service in Victoria on the Great Feast of the Dormition. About 30 people attended the Liturgy in a borrowed facility, Saint Barnabas Anglican Church. The congregation included two Anglicans for every Orthodox Christian!

Within the week, Father John and his wife Jenny had arranged to use a tiny chapel that doubled as the Anglican Diocesan Archives Office for the first home of what is today All Saints of Alaska Mission.

Four years later, All Saints had grown from four phone numbers to 85 souls, primarily as a result of receiving an OCA Mission Planting Grant, which frees Father John to devote all of his energies to his present and future flock and to raise the city's awareness of Orthodoxy in general and All Saints in particular.

"Without that generosity, I would be unable to teach, preach, and reach out to real people with real needs and a real desire to enter the Church," says Father John.

Mission treasurer Laura Coward agrees.

"Without the planting grant, we wouldn't have been able to keep Father John. There weren't enough people or money in the mission to support him."

Early on, Father John had joined the chaplaincy office

**Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa** pauses for a "family photo" during a recent archpastoral visit to All Saints.

John Mindala



John Mindala

**Enthusiastic parishioners** learn the finer points of traditional Orthodox iconography during classes hosted by All Saints Mission.

at the local university, offered courses through the school's Christian network and the local lay school of theology, and delivered lectures as a guest of the local Anglican deanery. His wife Jenny, a student of iconography, began to offer presentations for local art groups and at university functions.

Andrea Bugslag, All Saints' assistant choir director and a student at the University of Victoria, relates how she came to Orthodoxy and to All Saints.

"Father John came to the interfaith chaplaincy office, and I looked at him, and went, 'So what's with the outfit?' and he told me," Andrea recalls, replying by asking, "so can you teach me about your religion sometime?"

Father John lent Andrea a copy of *The Orthodox Way*, and later met with her. Several months later, at her first Liturgy, Andrea realized that "this is home, this is where I need to be.

Today, All Saints is made up of converts, some of whom come from a totally secular experience, as well as many individuals representing a variety of cultural backgrounds who had been born into the faith. One of the mission's strengths is the broad spectrum of cultures represented by its members.

Of equal strength are the various groups the mission supports – Bible study, a prayer group, educational classes, and another group devoted to supporting the sick and needy in the parish. Meeting in borrowed space has in no way dampened the faithful's spirits, nor diminished their pursuit of ministry.

Laura adds that one result of the OCA Planting Grant, it is "the community itself, the fact that it is a committed body of people, that makes it my parish, my family."

Father John credits the generosity of those individuals and parishes that have generously responded to the OCA Mission Appeal for the ongoing growth of the community.

"Their generosity and commitment to building up missions is incarnate in the faces of the people I care for," Father John says. "While people sometimes think the money they give to the Church ends up in a black hole somewhere, my experience is there donations translate into real care for real people. When I am counselling a person, or teaching them, or caring for the needs of actual people, I am only doing so because of the generosity of someone, somewhere." ■



# Planting the seeds of faith

in a secular society is not an easy task. But the challenges we face today are no more difficult than those encountered by Saint Herman and the other missionaries who planted the Church on this continent over 200 years ago.

In recent years, dozens of new communities – many in regions in which there had been little or no Orthodox Christian presence – have been established as a result of your generous response to the Orthodox Church in America's annual Mission Appeal.

## Words of gratitude from 2006 and 2007 Planting Grant missions

**Fr. Nicholas Kime/ St. Herman Mission, Port Townsend, WA** *"We have been the recipients of many blessings, both seen and unseen, which are directly related to the grant!"*

**Fr. Mikel Bock/ St. Herman Church, Fairbanks, AK** *"This grant means a great deal to our parish, showing that the OCA is behind the effort to support a full-time priest here."*

**Fr. John Parker/ Holy Ascension Mission, Mt. Pleasant, SC** *"The grant has enabled me to minister full-time, which has contributed to our numerical and financial growth."*

**Fr. Timothy Hojnicky/ Holy Apostles Mission, Mechanicsburg, PA** *"This grant helps alleviate some of the usual financial burdens new parishes face. We thank God for this great opportunity and strive to be worthy stewards of the generosity of so many of our faithful."*

**Fr. Michael Anderson/ St. Christina Mission, Fremont, CA** *"The planting grant enables us to focus on witnessing to the faith instead of on paying the bills!"*

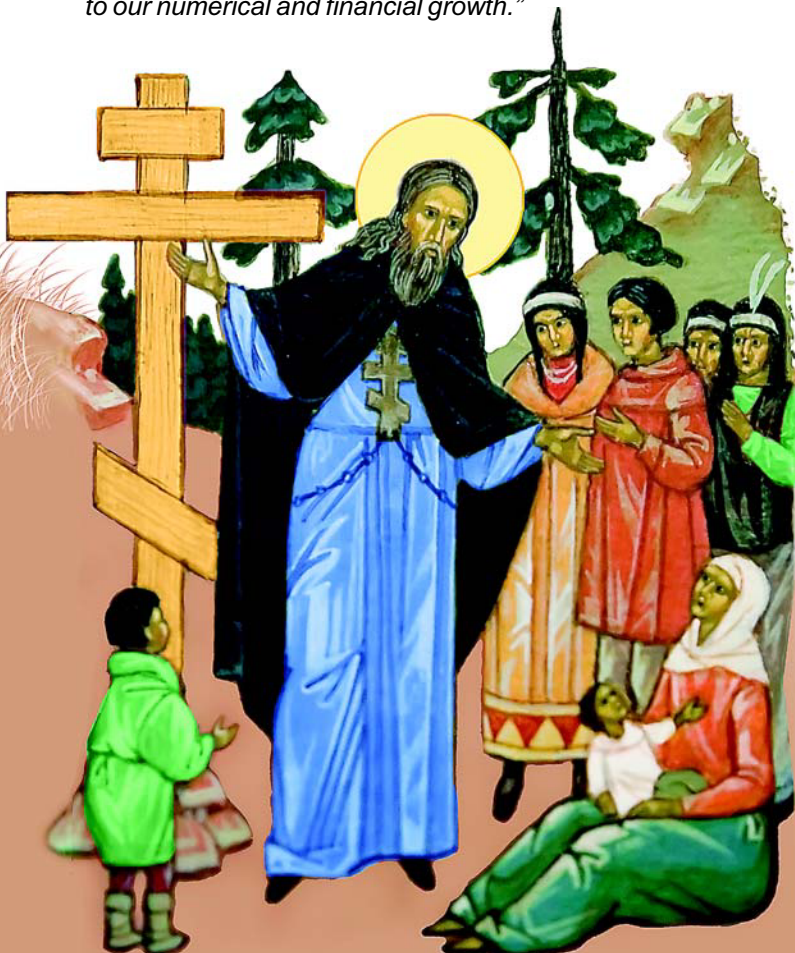
**David Pitts/ Member of St. Athanasius Mission, Nicholasville, KY** *"I want to thank the faithful of the OCA for their investment in our mission here. I pray that the Planting Grant program will not only continue, but will grow!"*

**Fr. James Dank/ St. John of Kronstadt Church, Lincoln, NE** *"I believe that the growth of our parish is a direct result of the generous gift of the planting grant."*

**Help ensure the growth of these missions while planting others across North America!**

**Your generous response to the 2007 Mission Appeal will make this – and much more – possible!**

**For more information on the Mission Appeal visit [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).**



# InMemoriam

**Editorial request:** Please inform the TOC editorial office at 630/668-3071 or [info@oca.org](mailto:info@oca.org) when a death occurs so announcements may be made on the OCA web site and in TOC in a timely manner.

## Brother Elias [Ippolito]

**CAMBRIDGE, NY** – Brother Elias [Ippolito], 69, of New Skete Monastery here fell asleep in the Lord on January 8, 2007, in Saratoga Hospital.

Raised in Stamford, CT, he studied philosophy at Georgetown University, engineering and arts at Lehigh University, and theology at Saint Joseph Seminary, Yonkers, NY. He earned a philosophy degree at Fordham University and pursued post-graduate studies in theology at Catholic University, Washington, DC. He also studied theology at Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY.

In 1965, Brother Elias entered the novitiate for the Byzantine Franciscans in Sybertsville, PA. The following year he joined the Monks of New Skete as a founding member. With the monks he moved to Ridgway, PA, and then in 1967 to Cambridge, NY, where he lived for the past 40 years. He was received into the Orthodox faith with the other members of the community.

At New Skete, Brother Elias taught classes in Sacred Scripture, sang in the monastic choir, supervised construction, served as one of the monastery cooks, and served as president of New Skete Farms. He also raised several New Skete shepherds and puppies through the years.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Vincent and Caroline Adeline, and his sister Carol. He is survived by his brother Richard, sister-in-law Cheryl, and nephew Rainer.

Funeral services and interment were held at New Skete.

May Brother Elias' memory be eternal! ■

## The V. Rev. Boris Symeonoff

**SAN ANSELMO, CA** – The Very Rev. Boris Symeonoff, pastor emeritus of Saint Nicholas Church here, fell asleep in the Lord on January 4, 2007.

Father Boris was born in Kronstadt, Russia, on August 5, 1911. Eight years later, he fled with his family to Estonia. Subsequently, he left Estonia for France where, from 1931 to 1934, he studied at the University of Paris.

From 1934 to 1938, he studied at Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, Paris. In 1943, he returned to Estonia, where he married Olga Vasilievna Pytel. He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood the same year, after which he served as a "supply priest" in Estonia. From 1944-1951, he served churches and refugees in Thessaloniki and Piraeus, Greece. He returned to France in 1951 and served at Saint Sergius Institute Church, Russian retirement homes, and Saint Seraphim of Sarov Church, Chelles.

Knowing of the Symeonoffs' interest in serving in the US, the late Bishop John (Shahovskoy) of San Francisco contacted them in France, and they were subsequently received into the Metropolia, as the Orthodox Church in America was known at that time. In 1957, Father Boris was assigned first permanent rector of the recently established Saint Nicholas Church, San Anselmo, CA. He faithfully served the community until his retirement in June 1987. Among his many accomplishments, Father Boris was responsible for the building of the parish's new church in 1968.

Father Boris is survived by his daughter, Anna Riazance, and her husband Andre, who cared for him until the moment of his peaceful repose.

Funeral services were held at Saint Nicholas Church, San Anselmo, CA, with interment in the Serbian Cemetery.

May Father Boris' memory be eternal! ■

## Protodeacon Peter Homik

**CLEVELAND, OH** – Protodeacon Peter Homik fell asleep in the Lord on December 15, 2006, after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Born in Cleveland on July 3, 1928, Protodeacon Peter served the Church as a layman and cleric. He served as president of the Federated Russian Orthodox Clubs [now the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America], a member of the Midwest Diocesan Council, past council president and treasurer of the cathedral, and a member of the cathedral choir.

He was ordained to the diaconate on June 29, 1997, after which he was assigned to Saint Theodosius Cathedral. He was especially known for the many ministries, beyond liturgical, that he pursued, including the regular visitation of home-bound faithful and teaching adult education classes. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America elevated him to the rank of protodeacon in 2006.

Protodeacon Peter is survived by his wife of 37 years, the former Eugenia [Jeanne] Timm; sons Peter [Julie], Matthew [Laura], and Melvin; and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at Saint Theodosius Cathedral, Cleveland, OH, with interment in the cathedral cemetery.

May Protodeacon Peter's memory be eternal! ■

## Deacon Joseph Kerns

**TACOMA, WA** – Deacon Joseph Kerns of Holy Resurrection Church here fell asleep in the Lord on November 24, 2006, after a tree fell on truck he was driving on an interstate highway.

In the truck with Deacon Joseph at the time of the accident were his son, Abraham, and two other men who worked for him, Alex Minneman and Jonathan Burell. Alex also was killed.

Deacon Joseph served Holy Resurrection Church for 10 years. According to the parish's rector, the Very Rev. John Pierce, "he fulfilled the meaning of the word deacon – servant – not only in the altar, but through his diaconal ministry worked among us and in the diocese."

Deacon Joseph is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; five children, Jeremy, Abraham, Clara, Katherine, and Susana Roberts and her husband Wesley Roberts; and one grandson, Anthony.

Funeral services were held at Holy Resurrection Church.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Benjamin, temporary administrator of the Diocese of the West, the parish has established a fund to assist the Kerns family. Contributions to the Deacon Joseph Kerns Fund may be sent to Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, PO Box 1332, Puyallup, WA 98371.

May Deacon Joseph's memory be eternal! ■



## Mission and evangelism in the “Burnt-Over District”

### Doing mission in a Gospel-distorting culture

**Father Stephen Freeman**

There is an area of New York state referred to as the “Burnt-Over District.” The first time I heard the term, I assumed it was an area prone to drought. I later learned that it acquired the name because it was once so “burnt over” with successive Protestant revivals that it had become a religiously peculiar area. It is the original home of Mormonism and several other early American cults. Apparently some people had been “saved” at least one too many times.

I have titled this piece “Mission and Evangelism in the Burnt-Over District” not as a discussion about doing mission and evangelism in a particular part of Upstate New York, but as a metaphor for looking at the culture in which we live and in which

we all do mission and evangelism – even when we don’t know we’re doing it. We’re all living in a “burnt-over district.”

A few years ago someone asked me why it should matter to the Church what actions they took, but it comes with the territory of being an adult. Being an adult means being a role model. There is no moral free ride. I will say the same thing about mission and evangelism. All churches are proclaiming a Gospel, simply by claiming to be Christian churches. And in proclaiming that Gospel, everyone is doing evangelism. No one gets a free ride. So in a manner, it does not matter what any of us think about the subject of mission – we are engaged in it by virtue of being the Church. We should be settled on this point – mission and evangelism are not options. You are doing them whether you know it or not.

## In this section

19 Evangelization

20 Youth & Young Adults

21 Christian Ed

22 Chaplaincies

23 Discipleship

24 Church Arts

But why refer to our culture as the “Burnt-Over District”? Think with me about a culture that has heard Christianity in so many forms, with so many twists and turns, that the meaning of the Gospel, the Truth of God in the God-Man Christ Jesus, is easily lost or, at best, obscured. I offer several observations and suggestions.

The first of them has to do with distortion. Doing evangelism and mission in a burnt-over culture means that we speak and live in a culture in which the Gospel is worse than unknown – it is distorted. The strange cults that arose in Upstate New York in the 1840s did so because a significant segment of the culture was ready to believe certain distortions, no matter how bizarre. G. K. Chesterton once said, “When a man ceases to believe in God, it’s not so much that he believes in nothing, as it is he is willing to believe in anything.”

The distortions of the Gospel in our culture are too many to describe. There are those who believe that the God of the churches is mean, hateful, narrow-minded, angry, or simply institutionalized. There is a growing preference for “spirituality” rather than religion, meaning that the presentation of Christ given by most churches, or assumed to be given by most churches, is running a distant second to something else. This distortion, I believe, is a major source of atheism in our culture – in many cases, the atheism being an effort not so much to reject God as to reject a *false* God. Whenever I have conversations with those who profess no belief in God, my first question is, “Tell me about the God you *don’t* believe in. I may not believe in that one, either.”

If the Gospel is distorted in the culture around us, then the first task of mission and evangelism is to struggle with the distortions within our own walls. To be Orthodox is to profess “right glory,” “right worship.” It requires that we be always and foremost a Church of repentance, emptying ourselves of the delusions that replace

**Evangelization to 20**

## IN THE WORKS

### New series on Scriptural interpretation to make its debut in March/April TOC

It is not uncommon that Orthodox Christians squirm when confronted by members of other faith traditions who want to discuss the Bible and its interpretation. This is especially so when the discussion focuses on the Old Testament, the interpretation of which can and does vary dramatically between faith traditions that tend to view it in a manner radically different from that of the Orthodox Church.

In light of this, a new series on Scripture, written by Fr. Ted Bobosh, rector of St. Paul the Apostle Church, Dayton, OH, will make its debut in the March/April issue of *The Orthodox Church*. Fr. Ted will take a look at what *hermeneutics*, or interpretation, can be found in the New Testament’s authors as they interpreted Scripture, especially the Old Testament – a very important point given Orthodox Christianity’s emphasis on reading the Old Testament through the “eyeglasses” of the New Testament. Fr. Ted contends that “the real hermeneutic with which the New Testament writers read the Old Testament is Christocentrism, not literalism.”

Among the themes that will be covered in the series are *Seeing Christ in the Old Testament, Prophecy, Typology, and “Did Jesus tell Bible Stories?”*

The series will provide an excellent companion to Valerie Zahirsky’s articles on Christian education articles that appear in each issue of TOC. ■

## The “Burnt-over district”

God, and crying out that God create in us a clean heart.

Virtually every service of the Church ends with the reminder that God is a “Good God Who loves mankind.” The fullness and the depth of that message need to be engraved on our hearts. Our own minds need to be renewed with the knowledge of the True God. When priest or Church act in such a way that the “Good God Who loves mankind” is replaced with something else, then the Gospel has been distorted.

To do mission in a culture in which the Gospel has been distorted, it is also necessary for us to be teachers. There are certain basics of the faith that cannot be taught too often or known too well. To correct deep, burnt-over distortions, we must emphasize certain basic things – again and again. For a congregation to understand that we are saved by union with Christ and not by the fulfillment of quasi-legal requirements is a huge leap. I frequently repeat the words of the baptismal interrogation in my sermons: “Do you unite yourselves to Christ? Have you united yourselves to Christ?” Finding different ways to say the same thing to help people make connections is essential as we correct the distortions of a Gospel too often twisted beyond recognition.

Finally, I suggest that we always remember to practice hospitality. The Good News of the God Who loves mankind can only be distorted if a person’s first encounter with the Church is cold and disdainful. In our parish we teach hospitality with the simple saying, “Everyone who comes through our doors was sent here for our salvation.” Think about it. We have nothing to offer the world other than Christ Himself, and if our lives are not united to His, then there will be no evangelism, no mission, only the distortions that already fill the world. As Saint Herman said – and I can think of no better words with which to conclude – “From this day forward, let us love God above all else.” This is our mission and our task of evangelism. ■

**Fr. Stephen** is dean of the Appalachian Deanery and pastor of St. Anne Mission, Oak Ridge, TN. This article was adapted from a talk he delivered at the OCA’s 2004 Pastoral Life Ministries conference.

## defending the faith

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12*

## Open your Bible!

**Father David Subu**

**A**n Orthodox man stricken with terminal cancer was offered a Bible to read in the hope of offering comfort and peace in the midst of his illness. His response was unexpected: “I never read the Bible before and I ain’t gonna start now, just because I’m sick. I’d feel like too much of a hypocrite.”

As startling as his response may seem at first, it is not entirely surprising, considering the experience of many Orthodox Christians in the last century. For them, reading the Bible was something done by priests in the church, often in another language, and they hardly felt well equipped to attempt to do so at home. Some even came to believe that reading or studying the Bible was “something for Protestants.” You can imagine what this type of thinking can do to the soul!

When a young adult goes off to college, and often even before, he or she will likely be confronted by numerous individuals who will engage him or her in discussions on faith, discussions on religion, and invariably, discussions on the Bible. The inability many Orthodox young adults feel when called to defend their faith against the onslaught of biblical quotations and interpretations just reinforces the notion that Orthodox Christianity is un-biblical. The solution to this fundamental problem? *We need to know the Bible.* As one of my professors in seminary put it, “We’ve got to know the Bible – it’s *our* book, but we’re getting ‘out-Bibled!’”

Reading the Bible is an essential part of the daily spiritual life of every Orthodox Christian. The Church appoints several Bible readings for every day of the year, walking us step-by-step through the epistles, gospels, and much of the Old Testament. Every service begins and ends primarily with the Psalms. The Divine Liturgy itself has been called a “meditation on the Scriptures,” since it is composed almost entirely of biblical passages linked together in prayer. Whether we realize it or not, we hear more from the Bible in our worship than we realize, which leads us so often to say, “Hey, I’ve heard that before!” Orthodox Christian worship provides the best context for the Bible to be interpreted and applied. The more familiar we are with the Bible, the more we will benefit from the wisdom of our worship.

We should not be afraid to read the Bible; it has the power to make us “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” [2 Timothy 3:15.] We also should not be so arrogant as to think we can understand the Bible all by ourselves. The Church, which the Bible calls “the pillar and ground of the truth” [1 Timothy 3:15], provides us with the resources we need to make an informed and time-tested interpretation of what we read so that we will not be lead astray. And with excellent resources like the *Orthodox Study Bible* – order one from [www.conciliarpress.com](http://www.conciliarpress.com) if you don’t already have one – there is no excuse to remain ignorant or to give others a reason to think that the Orthodox Church is not “biblical.” ■

## food for thought...

- 1 How often do I read the Bible? How can I make more time for reading and studying Scripture?
- 2 What do I know and believe about the Bible? Do I believe it contains the truth about God’s will for my life? Do I trust it? Am I willing to live by it?
- 3 What resources do I have to study the Bible and to help me answer the questions I have about it? To whom might I turn when I have questions?



## Youth & Young Adults

# Time to retreat

## Taking a break from the day-to-day routine

**S**chool got you down? Family on your back? Questions about life, friends, the future keep your head buzzing late into the night? You're not alone. Why not plan a retreat to help the members of your youth group re-group?!

**First steps.** Think about what kind of retreat you want to hold. Get together with your parish youth advisors, pastor, or Church school teachers and offer some suggestions as to where you want to have it (in the parish hall or elsewhere), when (a single day or overnight), and what you hope to accomplish.

Assess your resources – costs, meals, speakers – and make sure that you're not biting off more than you can chew. No need to rent an expensive retreat center or camp; some of the best retreats are held in church basements!

**The theme.** The most important part of the planning process is selecting a theme. Consider the needs and expectations of the potential participants. Themes that balance worship, fellowship, and discussions on putting the faith into action in daily life are best. Draw upon the issues the participants are facing and with which

### IN DEPTH

✓ **CHECK OUT** the wealth of retreat resources and ideas on the OCA's youth web site at [yya.oca.org/TheHubLeaderInfo/Retreats/index.htm](http://yya.oca.org/TheHubLeaderInfo/Retreats/index.htm).

[www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)

they're struggling. The key is to demonstrate that it is indeed possible to live a healthy spiritual life in a world that so often rejects the Spirit. In any instance, avoid exotic or esoteric themes; "The Historical Development of Great Lent in 16th Century Bulgaria" is not likely to attract a crowd, even though one or two people may think the topic is intriguing.

Poll potential participants, classmates, and other youth group members as to what topics would help them deal with living their faith in their daily lives. Present your ideas to your pastor, your teachers, and your youth advisors. They'll be happy to help refine the theme, suggest programs and presentations, and line up speakers and other facilitators.

**Set a date and time** well in advance to avoid conflicts with other activities, services, or events and to eliminate the "I didn't know about it" syndrome. Plan simple meals and refreshments well in advance, and encourage everyone to bring snacks that can be placed on a central table for everyone to share – a great way to get people to interact.

Advertise, advertise, advertise. While you'll want to make announcements in the weekly or monthly bulletins, via e-mail, on parish web sites, and through mailings, don't forget that the *best* way to enthuse people is through personal contact. Telling someone face-to-face that you hope they'll participate makes a far greater impact than an impersonal e-mail or poster.

Don't talk yourself out of planning a retreat because you think it's too hard or complicated. Ask for help – there are plenty of people in every parish who are willing to assist in any and every way. Armed with a group of dedicated and cooperative workers, you won't fail. And the planning stage will provide a means to get to know others better, and to encourage new or less active youth to become more involved by getting to know them personally.

With life putting more and more pressures and expectations on us today, taking a break from the usual holds the promise of spiritual growth, closer relationships with others, and a chance to truly "lay aside all earthly cares" – at least for a day or so! ■

## Ring in the new year – at a monastery!

**F**or the fifth consecutive year, the nuns of the Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA, invited young adults to join them in ushering in the new year! Thirty-six college and high school students, many of whom had attended the annual Orthodox Christian Fellowship gathering at Antiochian Village, Ligonier, PA, gathered in the monastery chapel on new year's eve to celebrate the Vigil for the Feasts of the Circumcision and Saint Basil, celebrated by Fr. Thomas Hopko. A festive new year's eve dinner prepared by the nuns followed, during which Christmas carols were sung. The students and nuns returned to the chapel shortly before midnight to celebrate the Akathistos, after which they rang in the new year – literally – by ringing the monastery bells! Many of the students stayed for the celebration of the festal Divine Liturgy the next morning.

"What a wonderful opportunity this was," said one enthusiastic participant. "Next year, *everyone* should come to join us!"



## And the point is...

### Interpreting the “less-than-obvious”, Part 1

**Valerie Zahirsky**

**S**cripture contains some phrases and sentiments, the meaning of which are less-than-obvious to Church school students and adults alike!

Undoubtedly, our students will encounter these words more than once during their years in Church school and in the services without ever understanding them. They are equally likely to encounter interpretations that do not reflect the understanding of the Orthodox Church.

Here are a few Scripture passages that Church school teachers have told us their students have asked about.

**1 Psalm 137:9/ “Happy [blessed] is the one who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock.”**

This dramatic and shocking verse actually describes an accepted part of warfare in ancient times, as mentioned in Nahum 3:10. The words reflect the bitterness of the Hebrews exiled in Babylon – a hostile,

foreign, and pagan land whose armies had sacked Jerusalem. Like many Old Testament passages, it warns the enemies of Israel that God will not let them prevail forever over His chosen people. The desire for revenge expressed in this and the preceding verses is not pretty, but there it is.

These verses are also part of our lenten worship. We too are “exiles” in a “foreign land” – this fallen world, rather than God’s Kingdom. Like the Hebrews, we are reminded never to “forget Jerusalem” – our true home with God. We should never let ourselves accept exile as a substitute for the place of glory Our Lord prepares for us.

And what about those “little ones” getting dashed against the rock? C. S. Lewis writes that he knows of things in our own hearts that are like those little ones: “...the infantile beginnings of small indulgences, small resentments, which may one day become dipsomania or settled hatred, but which woo and wheedle us with special pleadings and seem so tiny, so helpless that in resisting them we feel we are being cruel

to animals. They begin whimpering to us, ‘I don’t ask much, but’ or ‘I had at least hoped’ or ‘You owe yourself *some* consideration.’ Against all such pretty infants (the dears have such winning ways) the advice of the Psalm is the best. Knock the little bastards’ brains out. And ‘blessed’ is he who can, for it’s easier said than done” [Chapter X: “Second Meanings in the Psalms” in *Reflections on the Psalms*].

**2 Luke 19:8/ “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”**

These are the words of Zacchaeus, the rich and disliked tax collector who climbed a tree in his eagerness to see Jesus. At first glance, the words might seem to describe what Zacchaeus always does: he always gives half and always restores fourfold. But students should understand that Zacchaeus is telling the Lord what he will do *from now on*: as a result of meeting Christ, he will be honest and treat people fairly. Zacchaeus is making a vow, and chances are good that his future behavior will be a change from a less-than-honest past.

Jesus tells Zacchaeus and the crowd that salvation has come to his house, declaring that He came to “seek and to save the lost,” of whom Zacchaeus surely was one.

**3 Matthew 16:25/ “For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”**

This is another verse that sometimes confuses children and adults alike, who have been taught that saving one’s own life is a good and important thing to do. Older students should have an easier time understanding the verse, and even take it as a guide for living. The *Orthodox Study Bible* offers a helpful interpretation: “Here Jesus states the central paradox of the Christian faith. In grasping the temporal, we lose the eternal; in sacrificing everything we can know, we gain unimaginable riches. In dying, we live.”

In the March-April issue of *TOC*, we will take a look at some other “less-than-obvious” passages. ■

**Valerie Zahirsky** is co-chair of the OCA Department of Christian Education.

## GRAY AREA Q & As

### Sex ed in Church school?

**W**hat’s the Church’s view on sex ed? Is this a family and parental responsibility, or something better left to the school or Church?

Saint John Chrysostom clearly states that “the primary responsibility of Christian parents is to evangelize their children.” What he’s saying is that the overall spiritual, religious, and moral formation of children for the purpose of leading them to salvation belongs to parents.

From his statement we can deduce the following.

1. Parents are the primary instructors and examples in the moral and faith formation of their children.
2. As such, Church school, while indeed an important element in the spiritual formation of children, does not replace that which parents alone must and should impart in terms of knowing, living, and applying the Gospel of Christ to their lives.
3. Imparting Christian morality – one focus of evangelization and the broader context in which “sex education” must be placed – is primarily the responsibility of the parents, demanding that they themselves live a moral

**Gray Area** to 31



## Chaplaincies



**At first glance, St. Demetrius' Community looks like dozens of other new missions recently planted across North America – until one realizes that it's ministry embraces an entire continent!**

## This isn't Pennsylvania!

A community with a mission unlike any other!

**A**t first glance, Saint Demetrius' Community is not unlike countless other mission parishes. Worshipping in a temporary, shared facility, its faithful are used to setting up and taking down icons, the altar table, and other appointments. The Rev. Peter Baktis goes out his pastoral duties, celebrates services and sacraments, visiting parishioners, and conducting education programs for children and adults. His wife, Jeanne, leads the congregational singing and ensures that there's always someone to read the Hours and Epistle.

But this isn't Pennsylvania – or Texas or the west coast! It's Mannheim, Germany. Saint Demetrius' faithful include active duty soldiers, US Defense Department teachers and civilian personnel. And Father Peter, currently the only active duty US Army chaplain in Europe, conducts catechetical instruction classes via internet!

"I'm responsible for all of Germany and Italy, which makes visiting our far-flung flock a bit of a challenge," chuckles Father Peter, who is assigned to the 18th Military Police Brigade. "I supervise four chaplains

and chaplain assistants, and since the brigade covers all of Germany, I'm often on the road making site visitations to assess the spiritual wellness of its members and their families."

Father Peter makes regular visits to the Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany, where he ministers to soldiers who were medically evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This has been at times a difficult ministry, because often the soldiers are unable to speak and are only in Germany until they can be stabilized and moved to the US," Father Peter relates, adding that his wife shares in his ministry to the soldiers and their families as a member of the unit's Family Readiness Program, which ensures that family members are being taken care of.

Father Peter recently learned that he and his unit will be deployed to Iraq sometime this year.

Asked what the greatest gift Saint Demetrius' community could receive, Father Peter's answer was simple and heartfelt: "Prayer!" ■

## Lay leaders fill the void when chaplains are unavailable

**D**ue to the limited number of Orthodox Christian US military chaplains, it is often the case that, apart from occasional visits, Orthodox personnel may feel disconnected from the Church.

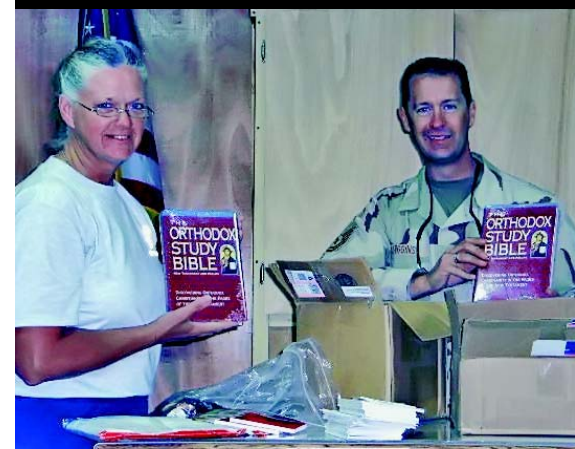
Filling the void are officially endorsed lay leaders, who receive the names of Orthodox personnel on a given base, publicize programs, and coordinate travel to Orthodox services where available.

"It's been my honor and privilege to meet incoming Orthodox airmen, soldiers, sailors, and marines and inform them about our gatherings and prayer services," says US Air Force Technical Sergeant Elizabeth Coons, who has served as a lay leader at two deployed bases for several years. "I've befriended other Orthodox Christians from coalition forces, including Bulgaria, Georgia and Ukraine. We all share the same faith and find a true camaraderie among our small contingent of Orthodox faithful."

At a recent workshop at the Pentagon, the prospect of increasing the number of lay leaders was considered.

"More of our Orthodox airmen are expressing an interest in serving as official lay leaders or Orthodox liaisons," says Chaplain, Colonel John Stefero. "They become our extended arms to gather Orthodox personnel who otherwise would feel alone and isolated." ■

**Spreading the Word** TSgts Elizabeth Coons and William Higgins ship Orthodox Study Bibles, donated by a number of churches, to military personnel in Iraq.



## Discipleship

# Meeting the neighbors!

## Loving God through serving our neighbor

### Father William Mills

**L**oving other people isn't optional. It's a command from Jesus Himself! This fact is evident in the scriptural definition of God – "God is love" – in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and in Christ's great commandment.

One of the most sobering lessons on love is found in Matthew 25, the Gospel read on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the eve of Great Lent. Jesus teaches His disciples about the final judgment, telling them how, when the Son of Man returns again, all nations will be gathered before Him as He separates them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will ask them whether they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and suffering, and welcomed the stranger. Those

who failed to do these simple acts of mercy will face eternal punishment, while the righteous will embrace eternal life. Thus, at the final judgment, we will be judged on one thing: did we love our neighbor?

This teaching about the last judgment pertains not only to individuals, but to our missions and parishes as well. It is within the local worshipping community that we share our common Orthodox faith and life and we show love for the neighbor in very concrete and tangible ways. Our missions and parishes have a mandate to engage in outreach ministries to the poor, the orphans, the hungry, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. Engaging in outreach ministry not only helps other people, but it also can transform the members of a parish community, especially as they learn how to work together towards a common goal by

sharing their time, talents, and treasures with those in need. If we all look at the strengths and talents within our various parish communities, we can find countless ways to love and serve our neighbors, and in doing so, learn to love and serve the Lord.

A few years ago our small parish agreed to get involved in local charities. Over a period of several weeks, I invited numerous representatives from local charities, such as Habitat for Humanity and the local Loaves and Fishes food bank, to speak to our parishioners during the Sunday coffee hour about the work of their organizations. After a few weeks of listening to these representatives, parishioners were excited about the "world around them," and decided to adopt the Charlotte Men's Rescue mission. On the second Saturday of every month, parishioners purchase food, travel to center city Charlotte, and cook hot meals for the men.

Parishioners were excited about helping with the mission, and not only did they want to go back again, but they wanted to adopt other charities as well! Now, five years later, our parish sponsors and supports nearly a dozen local and national Orthodox and non-Orthodox charities and philanthropic organizations. Our most recent charity is the national Project Linus Children's Blanket drive, through which parishioners quilt and crochet blankets donated to children in need, especially those with extended stays.

Every month our parishioners are engaged in several outreach programs; donating canned food through our Loaves and Fishes food bin, assisting at the local Men's Rescue Mission, or donating money for Holy Cross Orthodox Mission in Greensboro, NC. Furthermore, as our parish community grows in numbers, so too will our outreach programs. Over the past few years, we have slowly added more outreach programs on our Church calendar, and hopefully this will continue in the years to come. However, we are only following the example of Jesus Christ, Who teaches us that we love God through serving and loving our neighbor! ■

**Fr. William Mills** is rector of the Nativity of the Holy Theotokos Church, Charlotte, NC.

**"When I was hungry, you fed me"** Members of Charlotte's Nativity of the Holy Theotokos Church serve a monthly meal at the city's Men's Rescue Mission.





## Children, Liturgy, Art

Jeanne Plekon's vision was one that had rarely, if ever, been pursued. She wanted to make "a set of vestments that incorporated the simplicity, brightness, honesty, and imagination that flows so freely from the creative impulses of children."

Armed with material, thread, and artwork fashioned by the children of Saint Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY, she set out to turn her vision into reality.

"Psalm 148 had struck me as brimming with images, and it became the inspiration for the vestments," says Jeanne. "I had itemized each praise-giving image in the psalm on separate pieces of paper. Each of the kids selected the one they wanted to illustrate. Using crayons, pencils, pens, and felt markers, they produced illustrations of incredible variety and interest."

Jeanne then began the inspired, if complex, task of incorporating the children's artwork into the vestment design. Her greatest



**A grateful pastor** Fr. Alexis Vinogradov displays vestments designed by the children of St. Gregory parish.

challenge was "doing justice to the spirit of the original, and not to compromise for my ease the detail or expression the child had put into his or her work.

"This slow process allowed me the additional treat of really **Vestments to 26**

### Happiness from 4

## What happiness it was!

life become only more acute. For this reason this faith cannot avoid the *damm* questions. It poses them, revealing habitual, lukewarm manifestations of religion as empty piety and falsehood that forms a wall before the living person of Christ.

"Recent conversation with I. M.: about the contemporary decline of Orthodoxy, about its profound crisis. He: But how then can we know where Truth has been preserved? Always the same concern – external guarantees. 'Orthodoxy has preserved truth.' But in fact it should be approached the other way around: Nothing external can 'preserve' Truth by itself. Truth lives and triumphs through itself."

With what anguish he spoke of the dangers of Christianity without Christ! With what boldness! For this needs real daring. Father Alexander Schmemmann was not only a theologian in the almost forgotten sense of the word, but one of the most daring people I know of.

Should someone living in America, where Orthodoxy plays such a minor role, talk of wrongs, crises? Would it not be easier to limit discussion to one's superiority, to dawdle in the past – which is never a problem, to replace the search for Christ with glorification of one's ethnic church? Isn't this a favorite pastime today?

But Father Alexander, walking all his life toward Christ, saw only His truth. It is this vision that gave him strength and true direction. No superficial considerations: Should I be doing this here and now? Will this provoke our people? How will Moscow react? What will the old parishioners say? The new emigrants? The liberals? The nationalists? Nothing that compels us to shape our decisions according to *practical* considerations had any influence on him, because his point of reference was immutable. The truth which he searched for all his life does not wait for an opportune moment or for worthy and competent listeners. It demands to be proclaimed even if it might intimidate the weak of spirit or provoke those who have appropriated for themselves the truth.

Father Alexander valued above all "honesty with himself, with people, with life." He had a lot of contact with people; he had a clear notion of the "peculiar facial expression" of the modern man. If he had had fewer students, friends, interlocutors, he would still have understood the state of a soul seeking with all its might to make a "leap of faith," in Kierkegaard's

## INDEX

✓ **ORDER** Fr. Schmemmann's Journals from SVS Press on-line at [www.svspress.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=123htm](http://www.svspress.com/product_info.php?products_id=123htm).

[www.o.c.a.org](http://www.o.c.a.org)

expression. He understood how hard this is, what forces stand in the way of this move toward God!

This "honesty with himself, with people, with life" was for him the criteria of a man's integrity, of the presence of God in him. Conversely, phony piety – "the falsehood with which religions, Christianity and church life are permeated, repels me more and more. All this pseudo-

depth, pseudo-problems, pseudo-spirituality; all these pretensions to loftier understanding! All these declamations!" – can drive a man so far from Truth.

Is this not the greatest problem of religious life today – and of life in general? We talk of everything except what is most important. "Honesty" is a most important word today. Will it be heard? Will it be understood?

There have been different reactions to Father Alexander's book.

Many found in it the answers even to those questions they had been afraid to formulate, fearing that they might go too far. Having read Father Alexander's diaries, and not only once, they have now received a template for their thoughts and search. They have an example of how to look at the contradictions inevitable in Church life on the basis of a firm faith, without fear or faint-heartedness.

Others have angrily rejected the book.

Father Alexander would not have been surprised. He knew well the power of the *superficial* side of Church life! For so many people this superficial side is totally suitable; they perceive it as the only true faith. It is painful for them to think something so familiar, that the only life they can conceive of, is false through and through. God be with those who think thus in the simplicity of their heart. But there are others, for whom Orthodoxy is not so much a faith as an ideology.

"On my way home I was thinking, what primitive and unnecessary barriers our 'Orthodoxy' has placed before such people. This is the time it could be purified, renewed; it could shine! But that would require renouncing the idols, and especially the idol of the past, which is something Orthodoxy is least capable of doing since these idols are what they most cherish in Orthodoxy."

A religious renewal of Russia, like a political or socio-economic renewal, has yet to happen. For it to happen, we need to hear what Father Alexander Schmemmann has to say today on the pages of his journals. ■

# North America

## SCOBA hierarchs appeal for Archbishop Jovan's release

**H**is Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman was among the hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA] to call for the release

of His Eminence, Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid on December 19, 2006.

The hierarchs' expressed their "bond of brotherly love" for the Archbishop, who was imprisoned for the second time in the fall of 2006 by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [FYROM].

"We continue to be grieved by the imprisonment of this hierarch of the Orthodox Church, the disregard for his physical maladies, and the violation of his human rights, with negative implications for the faithful of his Archdiocese," the SCOBA hierarchs wrote. "It is well known that Archbishop Jovan was previously acquitted of the charges against him. Nevertheless, he is imprisoned again.

"We, the hierarchs of SCOBA, justifiably expect the appropriate authorities of

### IN DEPTH

✓ **READ** the December 1, 2006 letter of Metropolitan Herman to FYROM Prime Minister Nikola Gurevsky at [www.o.ca.org/news.asp?ID=1118&SID=19](http://www.o.ca.org/news.asp?ID=1118&SID=19).

[www.o.ca.org](http://www.o.ca.org)

FYROM to take the steps necessary to free Archbishop Jovan from prison," the statement concludes. "We also call upon our government of the United States of America to facilitate

the implementation of his release."

In the 1960s, the Church in the Macedonian Republic broke communion with the Serbian Patriarchate by unilaterally declaring itself autocephalous. A bitter dispute against the Serbian Church's presence in the republic has ensued ever since.

Initially a hierarch of the Macedonian Church, Archbishop Jovan returned to the patriarchate several years ago and has been the target of anti-patriarchate parties and civil authorities ever since. He was first arrested in July 2005 and sentenced to 18 months in prison for allegedly "inciting national, racial, and religious hatred, schism, and intolerance." He was subsequently released until his most recent imprisonment. ■

## SCOBA agency launches 24/7 internet radio

**W**ith an estimated 58% of US homes linked to the internet with DSL or cable and a growing number of Americans listening to web based radio, the Orthodox Christian Network [OCN] launched "The Ark," a 24-hour internet radio outreach, on January 21, 2007.

"The Ark" – fully accessible at [www.receive.org](http://www.receive.org) – provides a wonderful teaching resource to share the rich theology and worship of the Orthodox Church with the growing number of internet media listeners.

Programming also includes Orthodox Christian contemporary music by Orthodox artists and OCN's premier syndicated radio program, "Come Receive The Light."

"The Ark" is the second media ministry product produced by OCN, a commissioned agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. ■

### Vestments from 25

## Children, Liturgy, Art

studying each drawing, and observing features that would escape the casual observer," says Jeanne, whose husband, Father Michael, assists Saint Gregory's rector, the Very Rev. Alexis Vinogradov. "For example, there are angels with double-decker halos, and angels that hold baby-angels in their arms. Clouds can be red and blue and black... all in the same cloud! Rivers pour out of clouds. The moon has big pink spots. Trees all lean in the same direction, and so forth. What a joy to look again at the world through the eyes of children!"

Such a joy, in fact, that Jeanne says it reminds her of the words of Saint Augustine: "When you observe these creatures and delight in them, when you look to the Architect of all things, and when you contemplate his invisible attributes in things created through the intellect, then let us confess his name over the earth and in the heavens.... If the creatures are beautiful, how much more beautiful must the Creator be?" ■

## OCA priest hosts daily internet broadcast

**T**he Rev. Thomas Soroka, rector of Saint Nicholas Church, McKees Rocks, PA, began hosting a new internet radio program called "The Path" on January 29, 2007.

Broadcast by and produced in conjunction with the Chicago-based Ancient Faith Radio, "The Path" features daily Scripture readings, reflections inspired by traditional Orthodox commentaries and writings, and references to the commemorations of the saints.

The ten minute daily broadcasts air Monday through Friday at 8:00 a.m. ET, 12:30 p.m. ET, and 11:00 p.m. ET. They are also available via download on Ancient Faith Radio's web site and as a podcast via RSS subscription for users of iTunes®, iPods®, and other MP3 players.

Father Thomas is a member of the OCA Department of Evangelization.

An audio announcement and introduction to "The Path" is available at [www.ancientfaithradio.com/archives/pathintro.mp3](http://www.ancientfaithradio.com/archives/pathintro.mp3). ■





## After a decade, St. Innocent Orphanage is model for Mexico

Ann Marie Gidus-Mecera

**S**ince opening its doors ten years ago, Saint Innocent Orphanage has witnessed some major transformations.

Located on a former horse ranch outside of Tijuana, the orphanage is unlike any other orphanage in Mexico. A vision of founder and executive director Greg Yova, the number of boys taken in is purposely limited, with a high ratio of staff to boys. Care is extended well after other orphanages turn their charges onto the streets.

Greg and his wife Margaret believe these qualities have helped them gain government and community trust.

**Government calls orphanage a model.** Saint Innocent's consistently has been rated at the top of all orphanages in the state of Baja California, where more than 75 similar institutions exist.

"The Mexican government was naturally cautious at first, since we were 'foreigners,'" Greg explains. "Now they hold Saint Innocent's up as the model to follow.

"Initially, the community couldn't understand why we wouldn't send the boys off once they turned 17," Margaret adds. "No one else is doing it our way. But when they see that Brian, for example, is in his second year of pre-law school and completing an apprenticeship at the Tijuana Municipal Court, they are suddenly excited. Even people in the US who are familiar with group homes are impressed with the quality of our program."

Greg believes the orphanage's success is due to the safe, loving family atmosphere in which the boys can heal from the past and prepare for the future. Because of the boys' tragic pasts, it is a miracle that they can learn to give and receive love and that they learn to be "givers," and not "takers."

Another constant in the orphanage's program is spiritual training. While the boys are not forced to participate, daily prayers and weekly Vespers and Liturgy are celebrated, and the boys are always happy to chant, read, and serve.

"We want the boys to understand that when their needs are met, they should find



**Miguel Mejia is the fourth boy to graduate from high school – a blessing, since the average level of education in Mexico is fifth grade.**

ways to help others in need," Margaret explains. As an extension of their worship experience, the boys participate in outreach to a nursing home in the area.

**Staff increase brings depth.** While the original staff included only one person who cooked and cleaned and a few caregivers who supervised the boys, today's staff includes five counselors who guide the boys through their day, a psychologist, a full-time tutor, and a part-time learning disabilities specialist. While the majority of Mexico's orphanages are understaffed, Saint Innocent's has a ratio of one staff member for every two boys.

The core of the staff is Luis Sanchez, who has served as director since 1999. Tall even by American standards with a black belt in karate, Luis is "a gift from God in terms of being 'Papa' to the boys," says Greg. Involved in ministry since he was a teenager, Luis is considered a huge part of the staff's success.

The orphanage's physical plant also has expanded dramatically, with the addition of a computer learning center, library, newly renovated kitchen, basketball court, and soccer field. Transitional housing is being constructed for young men who graduate from high school and choose to continue their education in college or trade school.

**The next step.** Greg says that the staff often has had to learn through trial and error.

"There's no blueprint to starting an Orthodox orphanage for teenage boys in a third world country," Greg explains. "We hope to continue to refine the program, complete the facilities so we can accommodate more boys, and establish an endowment to ensure the doors of the orphanage will always be open."

While the Yovas have put more work into the orphanage than anyone, they are quick to recognize that the Orthodox community has made it possible for Saint Innocent's to thrive. Support has come from thousands of volunteers and financial and in-kind gifts. But Greg and Margaret agree that God's grace has been the key.

"There were so many things that were out of our hands and that could have gone wrong," Greg recalls. He believes God brought the people they needed with the necessary talents and abilities at the right time. As a result, the orphanage is operated by a "great team of people," from the board members to the staff and volunteers. "It couldn't have happened without of these people."

Asked what the orphanage needs most right now, Greg says that involvement from the Orthodox community is always crucial.

"Building up the general fund helps us ensure that the basic needs of the orphanage are met," Greg explains. And programs like the Prayer Team, School Buddies, and Santa's Helpers provide ways for people to contribute. [More information these programs visit [www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org).]

While the orphanage has seen a great deal of growth in the past 10 years, one aspect remains constant, Greg says. "People who become involved here always say they receive more than they give." ■

**Ann Marie Gidus-Mecera is a member of St. Gregory Church, Columbus, OH, and a free-lance writer.**

**Official from 2**

**STRIKIS, The V. Rev. Steven G.**, who was attached, is appointed priest-in-charge of St. Sergius Chapel, Oyster Bay Cove, NY/ November 13, 2006.

**TATE, The V. Rev. Matthew** is released from duties at St. Peter the Aleut Mission, Lake Havasu City, AZ. All other duties remain the same/ November 15, 2006.

**TREFON, The V. Rev. Michael** is released from duties at St. Nicholas Church, Lime Village, AK. All other duties remain the same/ November 1, 2006.

**ZAHIRSKY, The V. Rev. Michael** is released from duties at St. Basil Chapel, Cranberry Township, PA and assigned rector of St. Cyril and Methodius Church, Bellaire, OH and SS. Peter and Paul Church, Moundsville, WV/ November 1, 2006.

\* **ZDROJEWSKI, The Rev. Eugeniusz**, who was suspended, has had his suspension lifted and is returned to active duty. He is attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada/ November 15, 2006.

**LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

**FOSTER, The Rev. Justin** is granted a leave of absence. He is attached to St. James Mission, Port St. Lucie, FL/ November 13, 2006.

**DEATHS**

**CALCIU-DUMITREASA, The Rev. Gheorghe**, who was pastor of Holy Cross Church, Alexandria, VA, died on November 21, 2006. *May his memory be eternal!*

**KERNS, Deacon Joseph**, who was attached to Holy Trinity/Holy Resurrection Church, Wilkeson/Tacoma, WA, died on November 24, 2006. *May his memory be eternal!*

**PARISHES**

**DIocese OF ALASKA/ New Mission.** Orthodox Mission, Quinahak, AK, Serviced by the V. Rev. Nicolai Larson/ November 1, 2006.

**DIocese OF ALASKA/ Deanery changes.**

- Adak, AK is transferred from the Unalaska Deanery to the Anchorage Deanery/ November 1, 2006.
- The following parishes are transferred from the Dillingham Deanery to the Unalaska Deanery/ November 1, 2006: Chignik Lagoon Mission, Chignik Lagoon, AK; St. Nicholas Church, Chignik Lake, AK; St. Nicholas Church, False Pass, AK; St. Herman Church, King Cove, AK; St. John the Theologian Church, Perryville, AK; St. Nicholas Church, Pilot Pointe, AK; St. Matrona Church, Port Heiden, AK; and the Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, South Naknek, AK.

**ROMANIAN EPISCOPATE/ New Mission.** Three Hierarchs Mission, Baton Rouge, LA/ October 7, 2006.

\* *Indicates non-OCA clergy.* ■

**No. 473 ■ DECEMBER 2006****ORDINATIONS**

**BARNA, James Mark** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South at Holy Ascension Mission, Mt. Pleasant-Charleston, SC. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Dmitri and attached to the Diocese of the South/ November 26, 2006.

**COWAN, Deacon David S.** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Metropolitan Herman at St. Mark Church, Bethesda, MD. He is under the omophorion of Metro-

politan Herman/ December 2, 2006.

**[ERICKSON], Monk Panteleimon** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska at St. Innocent Cathedral, Anchorage, AK. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Nikolai and attached to the Diocese of Alaska/ November 12, 2006.

**MILLER, Sergius** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan Herman at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman and attached to the Diocese of Washington and New York/ December 24, 2006.

**OLEYNIK, Mark** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan Herman at St. Mark Church, Bethesda, MD. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman and attached to the Diocese of Washington and New York/ December 2, 2006.

**SIZEMORE, James** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest at St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, Columbus, OH. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Job and attached to the Diocese of the Midwest/ November 21, 2006.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**AYOUB, The Rev. John** is released from duties at Mar Elias Church, New Westminster, BC, Canada and attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada/ October 1, 2006.

**BARNA, Deacon James Mark** is attached to Holy Ascension Mission, Mt. Pleasant-Charleston, SC/ November 26, 2006.

**BUTRIE, The Rev. Matthew-Peter** is released from duties at St. George Cathedral, Rossford, OH and appointed rector of St. Nicholas Church, Burton, MI/ January 1, 2007.

**[COOKE], Archimandrite Gabriel** is released from duties at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ and attached to St. Paul the Apostle Church, Las Vegas, NV/ December 1, 2006.

**COWAN, The Rev. David S.** is attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA/ December 2, 2006.

**[ERICKSON], Hierodeacon Panteleimon** is attached to St. Innocent Cathedral, Anchorage, AK/ November 12, 2006.

**GASSIOS, The Rev. Paul** is released from duties at Archangel Michael Church, St. Louis, MO and Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church, Desloge, MO; released from the omophorion of Archbishop Job and the Diocese of the Midwest; transferred to the omophorion of Archbishop Kyrill and the Bulgarian Diocese; and appointed rector of St. George Cathedral, Rossford, OH/ January 1, 2007.

**GILBERT, The Rev. Vasily** is released from duties at St. Nicholas Church, Salem, MA/ December 29, 2006. He is attached to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Chelsea, MA/ December 30, 2006.

**JARMUS, The Rev. Andrew**, who was awaiting assignment, is appointed priest-in-charge of the Mission Station of All Saints of North America, Winnipeg, MB, Canada/ November 29, 2006.

**KATSILAS, Deacon Constantine** is released from duties at St. Raphael of Brooklyn Church, Detroit, MI and from the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate; transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and attached

to the Archdiocese of Canada; and assigned to St. John the Divine Church, Windsor, ON, Canada/ December 6, 2006.

**KUOLT, The Rev. Damian** is released from duties at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ and appointed acting rector of St. John the Evangelist Mission, Tempe, AZ/ December 1, 2006.

**LETTEN, The V. Rev. Nicholas**, who is retired, is released from attachment at Holy Apostles Mission, Portland, OR and attached to Church of the Annunciation, Milwaukie, OR/ December 1, 2006.

**MACK, The Rev. John** is released from duties at St. Sophia Church, Lawrence, KS and awaits assignment/ December 20, 2006.

**MAC KINNON, The V. Rev. Ian**, who was vice-chancellor, is appointed chancellor of the Diocese of the West. His other duties remain the same/ November 14, 2006.

**MILLER, Deacon Sergius** is attached to St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC/ December 24, 2006.

**MOULTON, The V. Rev. Andrew**, in addition to duties at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Granite City, IL, is appointed temporary administrator of St. Sophia Church, Lawrence, KS/ December 20, 2006.

**OLEYNIK, Deacon Mark** is attached to St. Mark Church, Bethesda, MD/ December 2, 2006.

**PATTERSON, The Rev. Justin** is released from duties at St. Anne Mission, Knoxville-Oak Ridge, TN and appointed priest-in-charge of St. Athanasius Church, Nicholasville, KY/ December 10, 2006.

\* **ROBINSON, The Rev. James**, who is on loan to the Diocese of New England from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, is appointed priest-in-charge of St. Mark of Ephesus Mission, Kingston, MA/ December 1, 2006.

**RUCKER, The Rev. David** is released from duties at St. Athanasius Church, Nicholasville, KY and attached to St. Justin Martyr Church, Jacksonville, FL/ December 4, 2006.

**SHAW, The Rev. Athanasius**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of Holy Ascension Mission, Olympia, WA/ December 1, 2006.

**SHERMAN, The V. Rev. Mark** is released from duties at St. Jacob of Alaska Mission, Montpelier/Northfield Falls, VT/ December 29, 2006. He is appointed acting rector of St. Nicholas Church, Salem, MA/ January 1, 2006.

**SIZEMORE, Deacon James** is assigned to St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, Columbus, OH/ November 21, 2006.

**SMITH, The Rev. Walter** is released from duties at Holy Trinity Church, McAdoo, PA and from the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and the Diocese of Eastern PA; transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Seraphim; and attached to the Archdiocese of Canada, where he awaits assignment/ November 26, 2006.

**STRICKLAND, The Rev. John**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of St. Catherine Mission, Kirkland, WA/ December 1, 2006.

**SWANSON, The Rev. Christopher**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of St. Elizabeth Mission, Poulso, WA. December 1, 2006.

**SZYRYNSKI, The V. Rev. Gregory**, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of Holy Myrrhbearing Church, West Sacramento, CA, December 1, 2006.



## RUSSIA

### Death of priest in fire highlights hard lives of Russia's rural clergy

Sophia Kishkovsky

**T**he death of a village priest, his wife, and their three small children in a mysterious fire has highlighted hardships that Russian Orthodox clergy face in isolated locations outside Moscow's bubble of wealth and power.

Most reports have cited villagers angered by the Rev. Andrei Nikolayev's battle against alcoholism, rural Russia's scourge, or thieves seeking to rifle his church's few treasures, as primary suspects in the fire that engulfed his home. It occurred in a typical, poverty-stricken village in the Tver region, several hours drive from Moscow. His church in Pryamukhino was once part of 19th century anarchist Mikhail Bakunin's family estate.

Russia's chief fire inspector has been saying that arson was the most likely cause. Police have said they were studying all possibilities, including a faulty heater and

even murder-suicide, a version suggested by the *Moskovsky Komsomolets* tabloid and quickly rejected by the local diocese, which implored the media to exercise restraint.

But the Russian Church was clearly shocked by the tragedy. News of it spread through Orthodox blogs before being reported by mainstream media, where it became a top story.

"If it was indeed arson, this bears witness to the moral barbarity of those who committed it," the Rev. Mikhail Prokopenko, a spokesperson for the Moscow Patriarchate told the Itar-Tass news agency. "Namely village clergymen are at the forefront of the battle to restore the Russian village."

Before his death, the priest had asked for protection from thieves. His family had already lost its last home to fire. Serving in the village, Father Nikolayev said, was "like being at war." He said he kept a gun



**"I'm afraid for my family" said Fr. Andrew, pictured with his wife Ksenia and children David, Anna, and Anastasia shortly before fatal fire.**

but would never be able to shoot a person.

"Much more serious measures should be taken by the powers that be and the government," Arkady Nebolsin, an architectural preservationist, told Ecumenical New International at an 11 December fundraiser for an organization called "Village Church," which helps restore places of worship. Abandoned or poorly guarded rural churches are highly vulnerable, he said. Thieves target not only icons and liturgical vessels, but also such details as woodwork.

In October, Father Nikolayev appeared on "Street of Your Fate", a television show about the heroism of regular people.

"I'm afraid for my family, but all is God's will," he said on the program. "I want to carry my cross to the end. I must not give up. People have started coming to us and I feel responsible for them." ■

### Pope Benedict visits Ecumenical Patriarchate

**D**uring a visit to Turkey during the last week of November 2006, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul's Phanar district, where he was welcomed by His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.



Upon the Pope's arrival at the Patriarchate, a Doxology was celebrated in the Patriarchal Cathedral of Saint George, after which Patriarch Bartholomew welcomed Pope Benedict. They also venerated the relics of Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, both former archbishops of Constantinople and predecessors of Patriarch Bartholomew. The relics of the two saints were taken to Rome after the 1204 AD sacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. It was a request from Patriarch Bartholomew to Pope John Paul II that initiated the return of the relics two years ago to Constantinople.

After the welcoming ceremonies, Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Benedict met privately to discuss issues of mutual concern.

On November 30, Pope Benedict and his entourage attended the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of Saint George on the occasion of the Patriarchate's patronal feast day of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

Detailed reports, photos, and videos of the historic visit may be found on the Ecumenical Patriarchate's web site at [www.patriarchate.org](http://www.patriarchate.org) and on the web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America at [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org). ■

## WorldBriefs

### Date set for ROCOR-MP reunification

The long-awaited reunification of the Moscow Patriarchate [MP] and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia [ROCOR] is slated to take place at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral on the Great Feast of the Ascension, May 17, 2007.

His Holiness, Patriarch Aleksy II of Moscow and His Eminence, Metropolitan Laurus, ROCOR First Hierarch, will sign the "Act of Canonical Communion," after which they will concelebrate the Divine Liturgy with members of their respective hierarchies.

The division within the Russian Orthodox Church traces its roots to the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the complex consequences it had on the life of the Russian Orthodox Church not only in the homeland, but in western Europe, North America, the Far East, and elsewhere. ■

## OPPORTUNITIES

■ **St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC**, the primatial cathedral for the Orthodox Church in America, is seeking a **development director**. A comprehensive position description is posted at [www.stnicholasdc.org/developmentdirectorjobdescription.html](http://www.stnicholasdc.org/developmentdirectorjobdescription.html). Interested candidates should e-mail a cover letter, resume, short writing sample, and salary requirements to [office@stnicholasdc.org](mailto:office@stnicholasdc.org). Include "development director" in the subject line.

■ **Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL** is conducting a search for a **part-time choir director**. Salary will be commensurate with educational and professional experience. Interested candidates should send a cover letter, credentials, resume, and references to the **V. Rev. John Adamcio, 1121 N. Leavitt St., Chicago, IL 60622-3502; Troika51@comcast.net**.

### Classics from 6

## Ecumenism – A heresy?

ecumenism, which can be espoused by the Orthodox and is nothing but an obligation of charity, and a "wrong" ecumenism, which confuses rather than solves the issues, is to be understood clearly by all of us. The awareness that "wrong" ecumenism is indeed heresy should not lead us to forget the mission of our Church to the world, to the people around us, to those who seek the truth, for, if we forget this mission, we cease to be truly "catholic" and "orthodox" and become nothing more than an introverted sect. But, conversely, there is an equal – if not greater – danger in accepting relativism, superficiality, and secularism (conservative or radical) as a valid principle of our ecumenical involvement.

Much too frequently both the critics and the proponents of contemporary ecumenism forget this vital distinction and thus find themselves in theological dead-ends. It is also quite unfortunate that in practically every country, except in America, the various Orthodox Churches in this area, as in others, are guided not only by sound theological reflection and spiritual discernment, but by political pressures from outside. We certainly should understand the difficulties of their struggle for survival, but it is our peculiar responsibility to use our freedom wisely in fulfilling our Orthodox task in ecumenical encounters and dialogues. ■

### Official from 2

**TATE, The V. Rev. Matthew** is appointed temporary administrator of Orthodox Mission, Helena, MT/ December 1, 2006. His status is also changed from acting dean to dean of the Missionary District/ December 5, 2006. His other duties remain the same.

**TOBIAS, The Rev. Peter** is released from duties at Orthodox Mission, Helena, MT. He remains rector of St. Anthony the Great Mission, Bozeman, MT/ December 1, 2006.

**TYAPKO, The Rev. George** is released from duties at St. Nicholas Church, Pittsfield, MA, and granted a leave of absence/ December 31, 2006.

### ■ LEAVES OF ABSENCE

**TYAPKO, The Rev. George** is granted a leave of absence. He is attached to Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA/ December 31, 2006.

### ■ RELEASED

**RUOCCO-BROWN, Deacon Joseph** is released from duties at Protection of the Holy Virgin Church, Santa Rosa, CA and from the Diocese of the West; transferred to the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman; and subse-

### Confession from 10

## Mud pies, mud puddles

the same as making new year's resolutions. Nor is it about making a contract with oneself, as Dr. Phil would have it. It isn't so much about what we are going to "do" for the Lord – fast, read edifying books, attend more services – but rather what we are going to allow the Savior to do with us.

Our calling during Lent is to strive to be as open to the Lord as the Theotokos was at the Annunciation: "Be it done to me according to Thy will." This begins with our *wanting* to do His will. Let the Potter take His vessel and clean it, smash it, refashion it during the Great Fast. We begin to allow that to happen when we come before the Lord in confession and allow His grace to work within us.

"Courage, courage, O People of God, for Christ will destroy our enemies, since He is all powerful." Courage – the willingness to do something even when you are afraid, and which comes when you stop putting yourself first – is needed for honest, complete, no-holds-barred confession. Don't let yourself, through embarrassment, nerves, or indifference, prevent this Holy Mystery which will bring healing. Abandon yourself to the Lord, and be held securely in the palm of His hand. ■

**Larissa Rodger** is a member of *Annunciation/Saint Nicholas Cathedral, Ottawa, ON, Canada*.

quently granted a canonical release to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco/ December 18, 2006.

### ■ DEATHS

**HOMIK, Protodeacon Peter**, who was assigned to St. Theodosius Cathedral, Cleveland, OH, died on December 15, 2006. *May his memory be eternal!*

### ■ PARISHES

**DIOCESE OF THE WEST/ New Mission**. St. John the Evangelist Mission, 351 East Encanto Dr., Tempe, AZ 85281; 602/418-2982. Mailing Address: PO Box 27447, Tempe, AZ 85285-7447. The Rev. Damian Kuolt, acting rector/ December 1, 2006.

**DIOCESE OF THE WEST/ New Status**. Annunciation Mission, Santa Maria, CA is granted a parish status and is now known as Annunciation Church/ December 1, 2006.

**DIOCESE OF THE WEST/ New Location**. Monastery of St. John of San Francisco and Shanghai, Point Reyes, CA has relocated to 21770 Ponderosa Way, Manton, CA. Mailing Address: PO Box 439, Manton, CA 96059; 530/474-5964/ December 1, 2006.

\* Indicates non-OCA clergy. ■



**Gray Area** from 22

## Sex ed in Sunday School?

life and provide an appropriate role model for their own children.

4. Parents who insist that imparting morality is the “job” of the Church, Church school, or public school are de facto shunning their responsibility, disregarding Saint John Chrysostom’s wise advice.

5. Finally, “sex education” apart from Gospel-based moral formation is often reduced to nothing more than biology/health/science, as evidenced in most public schools. It is well known that much of what passes as “sex education” may “educate” children in the “mechanics” of having sex, but misses the mark in terms of implanting in them a moral conscience and attitude – and this *must* be done well before a child is four or five years old, if not sooner. Even secular educators acknowledge this! And it is well known that many public school sex ed programs, while claiming to be morally “objective” and “non-judgmental” reflect, in fact, a morality that stands at odds with Christian morality.

### **S**hould sex ed be part of a parish’s Church school curriculum?

It’s just my opinion, but it seems that discussing sexuality within the broader context of Christian morality is appropriate, but it’s better to discuss it within the context of a focused retreat than in the brief, 45-minute Sunday School class – and it’s best to have such discussions moderated by someone who knows how to present it without sending conflicting signals. Better still, parishes should offer seminars for parents on the subject, offering instruction on how to approach sexuality with their children mixed with a healthy dose of Saint John Chrysostom’s wisdom! Ultimately, if parents live less-than-moral lives, the example they offer their children and teens can set in as rapidly as drying cement.

Sadly, it is often the case that the primary – or only – concern of parents is that their kids don’t get pregnant, don’t get someone else pregnant, and/or don’t end up with a STD. I’ve heard otherwise intelligent parents say blatantly stupid things like, “don’t *ever* engage in sexual intercourse, but *if you choose* to do so, *please* use ‘protection.’” *Duh!!!* This is like saying, “don’t *ever* drive 100 miles an hour, but *if you choose* to do so, *please* buckle your seat belt,” or “don’t *ever* inject heroin, but *if you choose* to do so, *please* make sure you don’t overdose.”

The bottom line is that parents need to be parents to their kids, not their pals or friends or big brothers or sisters or, worse yet, “peers.” While it’s true that children don’t come with an operator’s manual and that raising them, especially during their teen years, is not unlike riding a roller coaster, there is no excuse for expecting the Church school, public school, parish priest, guidance counselor, or someone else impart the lessons that are best learned at home, within the family, and by example.

– **Father John Matusiak** ■

**Got a question? Send it to [info@oca.org](mailto:info@oca.org).**

## Communities

Send photos and news to TOC Communities, One Wheaton Center 912, Wheaton, IL 60187 or to [info@oca.org](mailto:info@oca.org).

### Yonkers scouts receive awards

**YONKERS, NY** – Four scouts from Holy Trinity Church here recently received Orthodox scouting awards. Fr. Yaroslav Sudick, rector, presented the Chi Rho award to Amanda Rzyk and Melanie Sulich, while Andrew Nolan and Joshua Rzyk received the St. George award for Orthodox scouts in grades 2-4. ■



### High schoolers visit cathedral

**BOSTON, MA** – Bishop Nikon of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese welcomed religion class students from Marblehead High School during their recent visit to Saint George Cathedral here.

Accompanied by their teacher, Michael Hanna, who has brought his class to the cathedral for three years in a row, the students were able to exchange ideas with and ask questions of Bishop Nikon and Fr. Arthur Liolin, chancellor of the Albanian Archdiocese.

“The group also visits with clergy of other faith traditions,” said Fr. Arthur, “but word has it that they especially enjoy visiting our cathedral. For many, it becomes their first – but not always last – point of contact with the Orthodox Christian faith!” ■

**Intro to Orthodoxy 101** Bishop Nikon and Fr. Arthur Liolin give high school students tour of Boston’s St. George Cathedral.



## Communities

### Falls Church, VA parish holds women's retreat

**FALLS CHURCH, VA** – Thirty women gathered at St. Mary Church here December 9, 2006 for a day of prayer and fellowship sponsored by the parish's St. Juliana Women's Guild.

The day's theme was "In the Footsteps of the Magi: Offering Our Spiritual Gifts to Christ."

After the opening Liturgy and sermon, celebrated by Fr. David Subu, rector, Ms. Georgia Kazakis offered the first presentation, "Frankincense: Offering Our Prayer through the Liturgy," in which she stressed the importance prayer, fasting, and preparation for the reception of Holy Communion.

"Gold: Offering our Time, Talents, and Treasure" was the topic of a presentation by Mrs. Mary Ann Glodich, an American-Romanian Orthodox Women's Auxiliary board member, who shared the organization's vision.

The final presentation, "Myrrh: Offering our Love and Compassion to Heal Others," was given by Ms. Daria Virvan, director of Therapia Psychological Services and founder of Orthodox Women in Healing Ministries. She discussed the many healthy expressions of Christian love that one can offer to others, especially those in need. ■

**Women enjoy retreat in Falls Church, VA.**



### Alaskan faithful maintain tradition of "starring"

**ANCHORAGE, AK** – Despite being half a world away, Alaska's Orthodox Christians share a custom also found among faithful in some parts of Russia, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, and other lands – "starring."

Introduced by the early missionaries who initiated their evangelistic ministry in Kodiak in 1794, "starring" signifies the journey of the Wise Men in search of Jesus. Brightly decorated stars bearing with images of the Nativity of Our Lord are carried from house to house on poles – and spun around – while Nativity hymns are sung.

On the day after Christmas, Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, Anchorage, and Alaska joined faithful from Anchorage's St. Innocent Cathedral as they visited the Alaska Native Medical Center with their festive "stars" and brought the good news of Christ's birth to the sick and infirm.

"This is the place where we find opportunity for physical healing," Bishop Nikolai said as he distributed icons to the patients while sharing the Nativity greeting. "But it's through Christ Himself, the Light of the World, that we receive spiritual healing."

In towns and villages across the state, "starring" continued for several days after Christmas. ■