

Spring 2011

Jacob's well

Philokalia: The Love of Beauty



Orthodox Church in America • Diocese of New York and New Jersey

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

PUBLISHED WITH THE BLESSING OF
HIS GRACE MICHAEL,
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The Love and Pursuit of Beauty

by Fr. John Shimchick

“And it was good.” This, as proclaimed in the opening pages of Genesis, was God’s reaction to the creation of everything from light to human beings. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, in using the word “kalos” allowed for a broader definition adding to the quality of goodness that which is also “healthy and beautiful.” So one might say that God saw a world which was “well ordered and sound” (G. Bertram) in every conceivable way. In this issue we aim to explore the possibilities inherent in the word, *Philokalia*, which though usually translated as “the love of beauty,” can include these multi-layered dimensions.

For many of us these are times that probably do not seem very “well ordered and sound.” It may be difficult to find goodness in the things taking place in our own lives, that of our country and world, or even our Church. Yet as affirmed in the Kontakion for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, though since the fall of Adam the human image has been “sullied,” in Christ it can be “restored to its ancient glory and filled with the divine beauty.” We proclaim during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts that “the light of Christ illumines all things,” – even beauty itself. Knowing where, when, and how to look in ways patient and hopeful, without cynicism and despondency are essential. Realizing that there can be support and encouragement along the way can also be helpful. Goodness and beauty in their various forms are not only able to soothe, comfort, and heal – in Christ - they have been known to save.

Often they are there before our eyes and all that is required is the right commitment or concentration of time. Several years ago when visiting the Grand Canyon with my wife, the question was raised as to the best time for taking pictures. For some, there is a particular moment which they only will recognize, and for which they will wait hours or days. For others like me, there was an urge to be present at particular times – at dawn or sunrise. Given a fire across the rim



Dawn at the Canyon

from us which filled the entire Canyon with smoke at sunset, we settled for sunrise and the included picture. Finally, the Visitor’s Center suggested that anytime can provide the right moment.

In exploring this theme of *Philokalia* our contributors also incorporate this significance of time. Bishop Michael examines how it is that Great Lent can be a time for us to regain what St Athanasius called our “birthright of beauty.” We are honored to welcome as our guest contributor, Christopher Burkett, a world-renowned nature photographer, who provided our cover image (*Forest Light*), and an article that considers the phrase of John Keats that “beauty is

truth, truth beauty” (utilizing also his photo, *Swirling Veratrum*). Fr Sergei Glagolev, in his sermon delivered on the occasion of his 60th wedding anniversary to his wife, Gerry, coincidentally utilized the expression of the artist Michelangelo who in his eighties could say, he “was still learning.” We include many parish activities and events, announce the beginning of an effort to document the lives of our senior clergy and their wives, and introduce our Diocesan seminarians and their families. Our series, *The Spiritual Lives of Soldiers*, continues with Part II - Fr David Alexander’s reflection of what happens - “At War.” Mother Raphaela reviews Tomas Spidlik’s study, *The Art of Purifying the Heart*, which she liked so much she had it read aloud to the community at The Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery. Fr Stephen Siniari offers a true and lovely, Chekhov-like story, *The Letter*. Finally, we share information of an important program established by Bishop Michael, *The Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors*.

The love and pursuit of that which is beautiful, healthy, and good – that which is well-ordered and sound – may be difficult in times like ours. Some forms of beauty, even in the Church, can prove to be ends in themselves. But filled with the light of Christ they can also indicate the way and the direction for continuing on. ❖



Great Lent – A Time To Regain Our “Birthright Of Beauty”

by *Bishop Michael*

Rather than being received with anticipation and joy, Great Lent may be a time we actually dread. The demands of extra services, the rigors of fasting regulations, the fear of going to confession all weigh heavily upon our welcoming and accepting the Great Fast in the spirit in which it is given to us. But for the holy fathers, the great saints of the Church, Lent is a time of renewal, an opportunity for regeneration, another chance for us to regain our “birthright of beauty.”

So often when we think of “beauty,” we think of the face of a loved one, the landscape of nature, a masterpiece of art. These, of course, are examples of exterior beauty beheld by our physical eyes. There is even an ecclesial dimension of such beauty – classical church architecture, radiant iconography, the magnificence of the Liturgy. But when St. Athanasius said, “Mankind was endowed with a “birthright of beauty” (*On the Incarnation, 3*), he meant something different – the inner, transformative beauty of the human person – the “beauty” of the soul.

When human beings were created, God honored us with His divine image – Genesis tells us, man was made “in the image and likeness of God.” Taken from the dust of the earth, Adam was given life by God through His own breath, His own Spirit. This presence of God, this breath of God, projects the image of God upon human beings and gives us a beauty and a “crown of glory.” It makes us the ruler of creation and responsible for it (Gen. 1:28-29; 2:19-20). Man’s creation in the image of the Holy Trinity (“Let us make man ...”) means that our very being and the way we are to live out our life are designed to image the life of God Himself. In doing this, we attain to the likeness of God.

Man, through his disobedience, rejected this divine vocation and failed to realize his life as love and communion with the All-Holy Trinity. Immediately following Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden, we see the destruction of harmony and the division created between males and females, because they rejected both true love of God and true



love for one another. They lost their innocence, and the beauty of their soul was sullied by the dark stain of sin. Before eating of the fruit, “they were not ashamed,” but after, they hid themselves from God.

The Lord gave Adam and Eve a chance to repent, but instead of asking for forgiveness, Adam blamed Eve for the sin, and Eve blamed the serpent. And so, they were cast out of Paradise – their sin meant separation from God

and immortality. Their life became one of ugly corruption and impending death. In the words of St. Maximos the Confessor, man had “fashioned for himself a living death for the whole of time to this present age” (*Difficulty, 10*).

The Funeral Hymn of St. John of Damascus summarizes all of this succinctly in these words:

Thou hast called me into being from nothingness,
and honored me with Thy divine image;
but because I had transgressed Thy commandments,
Thou hast returned me again to the earth from
which I was taken;
Restore me to that image, to my pristine beauty.

His words so practically speak to the point of the tragedy of death in another one of the funeral hymns:

I weep and I wail when I think upon death,
and behold our beauty, fashioned after the
image of God,
lying in the tomb disfigured, dishonored,
bereft of form.
O marvel! What is this mystery concerning us?

But the Wisdom of Solomon tells us, “God does not delight in the death of the living” (Wisdom 1:13). After thousands of years of man’s suffering from the oppression of sin, the Father deemed it good to send His Only-Begotten Son to save us from sin and death and eternal separation from God. When the Word of God took on flesh and became man, He became everything we are except that He was without sin and a fallen will. He made it possible for man to suffer and

die in a redemptive fashion, modeling for us how to become a true person: reborn in Holy Baptism, united in His resurrection, continually working out our salvation in repentance, and growing in His likeness.

Our hymnography proclaims this truth in the Kontakion for the Sunday of Orthodoxy:

The uncircumscribed Word of the Father became circumscribed,
Taking flesh from you, O Theotokos,
And He has restored the sullied image to its ancient glory,
Filling it with the divine beauty,
This our salvation we confess in deed and word,
and we depict it in the holy icons.

When Christ became the God-man, He took on Adam's corruption brought about by the first sin. Adam's "garments of sin," according to the fathers of the Church, included subjection to the corporeal, the biological life. We must not forget that Christ took on that biological form. He condescended in such a way as to mold to Himself that garment of disobedience for the purpose of showing perfect obedience to the Father in all things. It is notable that our Lord chose to be born and to proceed through each stage of the human biological lifespan, from a helpless babe to a full grown adult. In so doing, he Christified every stage of our biological aging. By being obedient to His Father at every stage of His life, He revealed to us how we might be mindful of God through every stage of our life (Heb. 2:17-18).

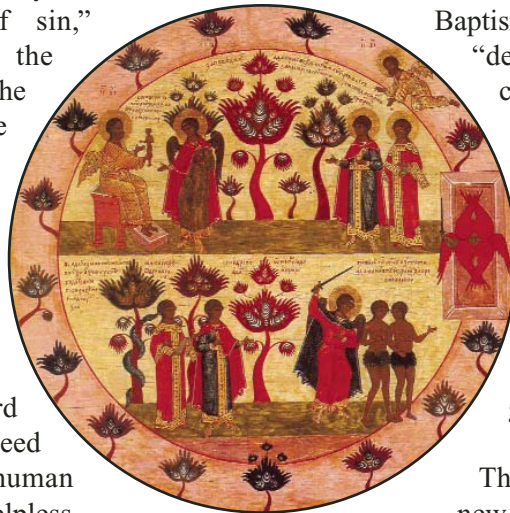
Christ died for the purpose of overcoming the consequence of sin, by defeating our subjection to death. By His Cross, the Lord destroyed death itself and restored us to the possibility of eternal life. One of our Saturday evening Vespers hymns proclaims this: "When Thou wast seen nailed to the cross, O Christ, Thou hadst restored the beauty of Thy creatures" (Resurrectional Aposticha, Tone 2). And from among the hymns of the Lenten Sunday of the Cross, we exclaim: "Through the Cross reveal Thy beauty to us, O Christ" ("Lord I Call" text).

How did He do this? Christ obeyed the law of death. That is, being crucified, having died, and being buried, Christ returned His flesh to the dust of the earth. But Hades could not stand the presence of He Who is Light and Life, and our bondage to that "death by death" was overthrown. For Christ had taken our infirm and mortal nature and swallowed it up in His Life (II Cor. 5:4). As St. Nicholas Cabasilas explains, Christ laid down man's "garments of skin," the result of Adam's sin, and raised man up to the right hand of God. The Lord not only revealed life as spiritual, He actually transformed our nature into an immortal and spiritual one – one that could again image the beauty of the Holy Trinity and attain the likeness of God (*Life in Christ*, pp. 162-164).

This is possible for each of us by our experiencing personally the Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Mystery of Holy Baptism. In our own baptism that former "deformity and hideousness" that caused man to progress deeper and deeper into spiritual decay is cast off, according to the teaching of St. John Chrysostom (Homily 8 on Colossians). Instead, we do not grow towards "old age, but youthfulness," towards beauty of soul and purity of heart, as is symbolized in the baptismal garment (Cf. Eccl. 12:1).

The challenge is to maintain that new and beautiful life in Christ. Having put off the old garment, that old tunic, that old man, and his slavery to the passions, we must not put them on again. We must not trade our beautiful, pure, white garment received in baptism for that darkness of sin that

formerly covered us. This truth is attested to in the *Song of Songs*, an Old Testament book of wisdom, written by King Solomon. There, the bride says, "I have taken off my tunic; how can I put it back on? I have washed my feet; how can I dirty them?" (Song of Songs 5:3). St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his commentary on this text, explains to us that that the bride is the soul; her tunic is the old man, her former "garments of skin." She is already baptized in the preceding verses (she "went up from the washing," Song of Songs 4:2) and has already put on the



*Sol'vchegodsk, Russia.
The Cathedral of the
Annunciation, part of a
three-part composition on
the altar door, 1570's*

“Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.” - John Keats

by Christopher Burkett

We experience beauty in many ways. In nature, we may experience a beautiful sunset, the sky full of stars on a clear night, the silence and quiet of a snow-fall in winter, the burst of fresh new leaves on the trees in spring, the wind and waves and salty fragrance of the ocean, the quiet depth of a forest glade, or the austere strength of a sandy and hot desert.

We can also see beauty in the smile of a friend's eyes, the laughter of children playing, the quiet murmur of an intimate conversation, and in the small kindnesses we give to each other day by day. Lives well lived. Newly born children. The list is endless.

There's the beauty of fine music expertly performed, nourishing food prepared with love, exquisitely written stories and poems, the beauty of ballet and ice skating, fine craftsmanship in construction, hand-made objects of beauty and practicality, and the beauty of skills mastered and obstacles overcome. In fact, almost anything well done with care and love can be beautiful.

So how can we define beauty? Beauty is hope. Beauty gives meaning, depth and purpose to our lives. Beauty makes our heart sing, our pulse quicken, our life worth living. Beauty uplifts, beauty blesses. Beauty is the touch of heaven and the rising above this fallen world.

When we speak of beauty this way, we are not describing those things which are merely pleasing to look at, but profound beauty which resonates within us and brings forth the remembrance and knowledge of God. Beauty on this level leaves us breathless, as we glimpse a hint of the divine presence which surrounds and fills all things. At those times, we see and know that beauty represents, in it's most exalted form, a touch of the divine.

When we experience beauty on this deep level, words fail us. Thought fails us. We have a brief, though veiled, glimpse into that world of light, power and grace that calls us to respond with

wonder and praise. In those profound moments, we need no further proof and our hearts can be changed forever.

Nevertheless, while the natural world is filled with beauty, life and wonder, it still pales by comparison with the depth of beauty contained within the Orthodox Church and our church sacraments. One of the unique characteristics of the Orthodox Church is her recognition of the contribution of beauty to our spiritual life. Our homes and churches are filled with Icons and our services incorporate the use of priestly vestments, chanting and singing, processions, incense, candles, and precisely choreographed sacraments. Beauty is an integral and vital part of our Orthodox worship.



Swirling Veratrum, Alaska

This is dramatically evident during Divine Liturgy. During Liturgy, heaven and earth are united and the Saints and angels are present with us. When the chalice is brought forth, we are given Christ's divine gift of His life. There is nothing more beautiful than this, when we truly “taste and

see” and are blessed with the experience of Christ's peace, love and humility. We then know the reality of His statement, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

At that moment, everything else fades away and we are filled with the realization that Christ's presence within us is the ultimate consummation of beauty.✠

Christopher Burkett has been photographing the landscape for 35 years, with the help of his wife, Ruth, as a way of implementing the blessings and grace he has received through the Orthodox Church. They are fortunate in being able to make a living selling Christopher's hand made photographic prints which are sold in various photographic galleries across the country. For more information: christopherburkett.com. In New York City his work can be seen at the Michael Ingbar Gallery, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; (212) 334-1100

Ancora Imparo: I am Still Learning

by Fr Sergei Glagolev

(Editor's Note: Originally, Fr Sergei was asked to write an article on the quote attributed to the artist Michelangelo in his late eighties that "I am still learning." As it turned out, this became the foundation of his sermon preached at Holy Trinity Church, East Meadow, NY on January 23, 2011, the occasion of his 60th Wedding Anniversary to his wife, Gerry.)

I hesitated when Fr. Martin asked me to preach this morning on marriage. Honestly, after 60 years of marriage to my dearest wife Gerry, I am, in fact, still learning. But that's both the wonder and the beauty of the Sacrament of Love: it never ceases to amaze and astound, to surprise and strike with wonder the loving hearts open to the grace that God gives for a woman and man to give themselves one to another.



Be amazed, St. Paul says to us in the Sacrament Rite of Matrimony: 'this is a great Mystery, concerning Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32). St. Paul uses the word "Mystery" as the original word for "Sacrament" – "Mysterion" in the Greek of the original New Testament text. Sacramental Mysteries can never be completely comprehended intellectually, but are revealed by the light of understanding given to the eyes of the heart.

This shared experience given to the husband and wife is deeply personal; we don't speak loosely about personal, intimate, "Holy things." And yet, Holy Things are meant to be shared in Christ and the Church, in Church, with one's children and children's children, with relatives and friends, with friends and neighbors – most certainly with the two or three gathered together in the promised presence of Christ.

So have we assembled this morning in Church as the Lord has commanded. And the Holy Gospel brought into our presence in the Little Entrance is the most sure sign that Christ is truly among us. It should humble us to know that our Lord comes to us calling us His "FRIENDS." How much more personal can He get? And when He calls us to partake of His Most Precious Body and Blood from the Chalice of His

Love, He calls each and every one of us personally, BY NAME! Love is not abstract. Friendship can never be impersonal. If our Lord calls those He has called together His friends, are we not obliged to be friends with one another in His presence? Listen, and take to heart the exhortation that comes from the Holy Altar before we dare to utter the Creed: "Let us love one another, so that with one mind we may confess!" This is the Mystery of Christ and the Church. Christian marriage is meant to be the microcosm of this awesome Mystery.

We all fail beloved. But let's keep trying. No matter how long it takes, no matter how many years our Lord gives us to practice, let's keep on learning. God bless you all, God bless my precious Gerry, the mother and grandmother of our children and grandchildren, my co-worker who puts up with my in every endeavor and circumstance, my companion who seems never to run out of patience...well, almost never...For 60 years she has been the love of my life. Best of all, she has been my best friend.

Christ is among us! Christ is in our midst!
He is and ever shall be – now and ever. Amen.✠

Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and South America

The Assembly of Bishops is a council of all the active, canonical Orthodox bishops of North America. Its purpose is to deepen the ties of brotherhood among the bishops, give them a common and united voice, and create a greater unity of action among all the Orthodox faithful of North America, thereby strengthening the Church's witness to her faith in Jesus Christ.

www.assemblyofbishops.org

St. John's Parish and Pastor Celebrate Anniversaries

On May 16, 2010 St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church of Passaic, New Jersey celebrated the eighty-fifth anniversary of its founding and fifty years of worship in its current temple. It was also a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of priesthood of the parish's rector, Archpriest Wilfred Sophrony Royer.

The Hierarchical Liturgy, officiated by His Grace, Bishop Michael, included Fr Royer, Archpriests John Nehrebecki and James Mason, Protodeacon Paul Sudol, and Deacon Paul Hilko. Fr. Mason was a former rector of the parish, and Deacon Hilko is the son of the parish's longtime and beloved choirmaster, Michael Hilko. Responses at Divine Liturgy were sung by the parish choir under the direction of Maryann Stagen.

A Diocesan Gramмота was presented by Bishop Michael to lifelong parishioner, and parish trustee, Peter Junda. Mr. Junda has faithfully served St. John's in a variety of capacities. He was president of the parish trustees several times, leading the community in the construction of its present temple, school, and rectory (accomplished in the 1960's). Mr. Junda has also been parish controller and long time member of the parish choir. He has also repeatedly represented St. John's at diocesan assemblies and All-American Councils. He and his wife, Florence, have been married for sixty years and are active in volunteer work at a local food pantry.

St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church was established on July 12, 1925 by 123 former Greek Catholics returning to Orthodoxy. The parish founders were Lemkos and Rusyns who previously worshipped at St. Michael's Greek Catholic Cathedral in Passaic. Under the leadership of Fr. Peter Kohanik, the former Swedish Lutheran Church on Jackson Street was purchased in October 1925 and remained the parish's temple until 1960. English began to be used at Divine Liturgy in 1949, making St. John's one of the very first area parishes to

conduct a significant portion of its worship in the English language

St. John's was served by a total of eight rectors over its eighty-five years: Protopresbyter Peter Kohanik (1925-1969), Archpriest Daniel Donovan (1969-1981), Archpriest Leonid Kuberski (1981-1988), Archpriest Daniel Pavelchak (1988-1991), Archpriest James Mason (1991-1998), Archimandrite Nicholas Iuhos (1999-2001), Priest Christopher Swanson (2001-2003), and Archpriest Wilfred Sophrony Royer (2003 to Present).

Chrismated into the Orthodox Church in 1981, Fr. Sophrony attended St. Tikhon's Seminary, Marywood University, and earned a BA from St Peter's College. He received a M.A. and Ph.D. in

Theology from Fordham University and another Ph.D., in Philosophy from Warnborough University. Over his twenty years of priesthood he has been rector of St. Spiridon Russian Orthodox Church in Perth Amboy, NJ (1990-1994), St. Michael Russian Orthodox Church in Newark, NJ (1994-1997), St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church in Spring Valley, NY (1997-2003),

and St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church in Passaic, NJ (2003 to Present). He has also had a teaching career lasting over twenty-two years, having taught Theology and Philosophy at St. Francis College (1988-1998), St. Peter's College (1990 to Present), St. Tikhon's Seminary (1998-2002), Fordham University (2002-2003), and Marymount College (2005).



During the week of March 19-20, Bishop Alejo of Mexico City visited St John's, serving in Spanish and leading a Supplication Service to our Lady of Guadalupe on Saturday evening and the Sunday Divine Liturgy.✙



Jacob's well
Spring 2011

WE'RE SO SORRY...
Editor's Note:
We regret that the following two articles were omitted from our Fall, 2010 issue

St. Gregory Palamas Glen Gardner, NJ Sponsored an Icon Exhibit

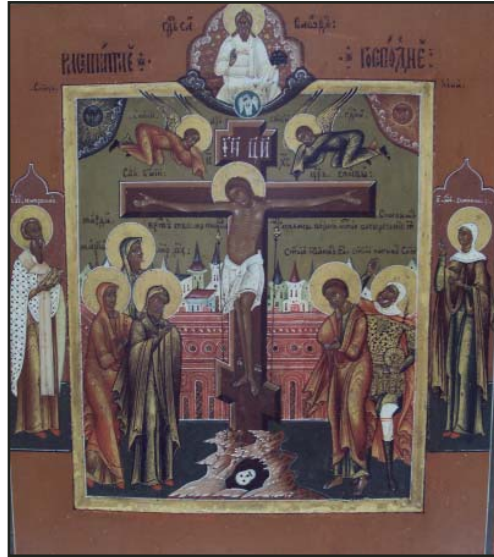
Over the weekend of May 22-23 St. Gregory Palamas Church, Glen Gardner, N.J. sponsored an icon exhibit as outreach to the community.

The icons were from the private collection of Corrado Altomare, M.D., St. Gregory's reader and parish council president. Dr. Altomare began his collection as a teenager. It has grown to more than forty icons of both the Russian and Byzantine traditions spanning the 17th-20th Centuries.

The icons were placed along the walls of the 1910 Gothic chapel of the Anglican Sisters of St. John the Baptist in Mendham, N.J. It was not just another museum icon exhibit but with lampadas and sand boxes, incense and vespers it was Orthodox worship. It was not without significance that this experience with its three lectures took place over Pentecost weekend where the witness of the Orthodox Church could be seen, heard, felt, and experienced in a more profound way than on museum walls.

The first lecture was delivered by parishioner, Cyril Gary Jenkins, Ph.D. Chair of the History Department and professor of Medieval & Renaissance History at Eastern University, St. David's, Pa. where he also teaches a course,

Eastern Orthodox History & Theology. Dr. Jenkins spoke about the Iconoclast heresy and the restoration of icons in the Orthodox Church. His talk was well received and engendered many questions. In the afternoon Dr. Altomare gave a presentation on icons using the Icon of the Descent into Hades as a principal example. He tied together the visuals of the icon with the scriptures, teachings and worship of the Orthodox Church.



Following Dr. Altomare's talk and Q & A, St. Gregory's rector, Archpriest Thomas Edwards served Great Vespers of the Eve of Pentecost. The chapel was packed to capacity with the majority of worshipers being non-Orthodox. Copies of the service were distributed. St. Gregory's Choir directed by Michelle Lelo, joined by the sisters sang the vespers with everyone joining in. It was one of those "heaven on earth" experiences. Many inquires were made of the pastor and parish members about the Orthodox Church. Inquiries about visiting the parish by individuals and groups developed. The program was concluded on Pentecost afternoon when Dr. Altomare returned to give a third talk reiterating Orthodox teachings by means of the Icon of the Resurrection. ✦

Coat Drive in Wayne, NJ

The parishioners of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Wayne, NJ recently coordinated a coat drive during which 225 coats were collected. They will be distributed during a homeless count in Paterson, Clifton, and Passaic, where recipients will also be directed to shelters and services in the area. ✦



New Church School Format Initiated at St Basil's, Watervliet, NY

Many of us understand the importance of education. Children attend school for 7-8 hours/day, have homework and participate in extra curricular activities to help them become productive members of society. The Church in her wisdom always has and still does recognize the need for education for our children also. Education, in the Christian sense, involves not only "book" learning, but also experiential learning which takes place primarily within the Church services and in the community of the Church.



Recognizing the importance of educating our children and the responsibility we have to do this to the best of our ability, we at St. Basil's in Watervliet, NY have adopted a once a month, 2:45 - 6:30pm, Saturday Church School program to allow for greater quality time for education, greater interaction between the Priest of the parish and the children and between the children themselves. This interaction was an integral part of "life" years ago when the Church community centered around the Church both spiritually and physically. Church members saw and interacted with each other in almost all parts of their lives, which is not often the case today.

We at St. Basil's have found that this format not only fosters bonding between our pastor, Fr. Peter Olsen, and the children and between the children themselves, but allows for everyone present to receive an entire "lesson" that is not dependent upon the prior lesson, hence receiving benefit each time they attend.

It must be noted that in order for this program to work parents need to support it. Prior to our beginning this program format a meeting was held with all of the parents where the format was presented, where

questions were asked and answered and where a commitment from the parents was requested before this format would be initiated.

Below are some of the topics and projects chosen by the Church School group under the guidance of Fr. Peter for our first year.

- September: Parts of the Church and Church etiquette/Children paste items found in Church on an outline of the Church where they belong
 - October: Proskomedija/Children bake Proskophora and offer individual loaves for health of family members, living and deceased
 - November: The Divine Liturgy/searched for texts from the Liturgy within the Bible. Younger children colored pictures of events in Liturgy.
 - December: The Feasts of Christ's Nativity and Theophany/decorated Holy Water bottles and children took Holy Water home with them
- NOTE: *Projects for these months have not been decided.*
- January: Prayer
 - February: The Sacraments of Confession and Communion
 - March: Lenten periods/Fasting
 - April: Holy Week and Pascha
 - May: Pentecost/Lives of the Saints/Namesdays
 - June: Different services of the Church with an emphasis on Vespers

***After the Feast of Ss. Peter & Paul in June a pool party and picnic is planned for the children and their families*

To date the attendance at the Saturday program has been near 100%. The children are more comfortable in their interactions with Fr. Peter as he attends the entire day with them, including the free time portion and dinner. Children have been gradually joining the choir for services other than the Vespers they all attend together on the Church School Saturday. Children have been getting together at each other's homes and are becoming friends.

It remains to be seen whether this format will continue to serve us at St. Basil's, but the initial reading appears to be good. May God Bless us as we undertake to allow Him to work through us in all that we do.❖

God's Gift: The Orthodox Mission in Lansing, NY

by Ally Oleynik

Looking for a church to welcome you in fellowship, prayer, and the beauty of Orthodoxy? Until now, your Orthodox options in Tompkins County were limited to just one Orthodox church while neighboring Broome County offered eight Orthodox places of worship. But, with the help of a budding congregation it is now possible to take a 20 minute drive to Lansing, NY to share in an English speaking worship service with members of the Orthodox Church in America.

Their mission is simple, "to be faithful in fulfilling the commandment of Christ to go into all the world and make disciples of all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all [things that He has] commanded."



Until now, St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in downtown Ithaca was the only option for those seeking to experience the beauty of Orthodoxy in Ithaca. This was especially helpful for those from a Greek heritage. For those in search of more English in the services, and who don't mind a short drive, Holy Apostles Mission in Lansing has opened its doors to Tompkins County.

Holy Apostles Orthodox Church is a mission parish in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). After several attempts to start an English speaking mission church in Tompkins County, Chaplain Matthew Binkewicz of Lansing, contacted the newly elected OCA Bishop Michael of New York and New Jersey.

Bishop Michael grew up in Binghamton and supported his longtime friend's vision and also understood the need for an OCA parish in the Ithaca area. Within the past two decades the OCA has established over 220 new parishes that are non-ethnic in origin and use only the English language in worship. Bishop Michael has supported these passionate efforts to start Holy Apostles Mission. He appointed Father Timothy Holowach as Priest-in-

Charge, while logistical support is provided by SS Peter and Paul Church in Endicott, NY, as a missionary outreach of the parish.

Fr. Matthew, described the community as a newly planted tree that cannot be ignored. The parishioners are the caretakers, commanded to water and feed that tree with prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and most importantly, to participate in the services. Eventually the small tree will grow and bloom into a mature tree with deep roots enabling it to be grounded firmly in the earth.

The first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in August 2010 with over 50 people in attendance. The Mission is now renting All Saints Catholic Church in Lansing until they can fund a permanent home. All Saints was chosen for three reasons: heat, parking, and accessibility. The Mission is adding its own Orthodox elements such as an iconostasis, which is usually grand and elaborate with Royal doors, but presently their's consists of two portable icons. But the sweet aroma of incense, the familiar melodies of the a cappella choir, the gathering of people, and constant prayers are what make this building an Orthodox church.

Encouragement also comes from other mission parishes, like the All Saints of Alaska Mission in Victoria, British Columbia. Parishioner Bev Cooke remembered, "Within three years, our All Saints parish had grown from four phone numbers to eighty-five souls." Collecting those souls takes patience and it is also important to remember that the OCA believes that "a mission is people first, buildings and property second."

Paula Fedorka, a member of Holy Apostles said, "I used to drive to Syracuse every Sunday, and that meant a 2-hour round trip." So naturally, she was thrilled when she saw an advertisement in the Ithaca

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Journal for this newly established mission parish. In some countries, like Russia, there are five Orthodox churches within walking distance of one another. Here in America, thousands of people will drive hours to go to football games on Sunday morning, but it is difficult to motivate people to drive an hour to church.

“People are only going to come to church if it’s a 15 to 20 minute drive,” said Fr. Holowatch who commutes from Endicott each week. He knew that there was a need for an Orthodox church within driving distance. Frs. Holowatch and Binkewicz also knew that an English speaking liturgical service would be a key factor in building a new community.

Bernie Lopez, who has lived in Ithaca her whole life and who is not Greek, attended St. Catherine’s Greek Orthodox Church. She said “After 57 years I finally found a church where I feel at home and comfortable.” Bernie has felt a part of the Holy

Apostles family from the first time she entered the new Mission. She fondly remembers that Fr. Binkewicz even briefly left the choir to introduce himself and to see if she had any questions on the day of her first visit.

Fellowship hour after the service offers more than just homemade soup and baked goods. It is the perfect opportunity for new members to meet and learn about one another. The Orthodox community is very small, which makes it easy to reach out and connect with newcomers. And, after fasting for 12 hours before taking Holy Communion, it is a joy to have a hearty meal made by different parishioners especially during the cold Ithaca winters. ❖

For more information, please visit the church website at:

<http://www.holyapostlesorthodoxchurch.com>.

Ally Oleynik is a student at Ithaca College.

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Bridegroom, Christ. Of this beauty we sing at every Baptism: “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!” (Gal. 3:27).

And what of those of us who do, through human weakness, fall from grace and sully that garment once white and pure with the darkness and defilement of sin? What of those of us who have squandered our “birthright of beauty”? They find themselves like the Prodigal who spent his inheritance on sinful living, no longer in the bridal chamber with the Bridegroom but “in a far country,” wallowing in the mud with swine, sharing not the Banquet of the Kingdom, but rather the pods that the pigs ate. The Gospel calls us to repentance and confession, in order to receive anew the forgiveness of the Father and our “birthright of beauty.” The Lord in His parable gives us every assurance that our heavenly Father will receive us with joy and gladness if we only “arise and go,” confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from the “home” where we truly belong. The Master promises us the inheritance that was once ours. The robe, the ring and the banquet will be ours again. (Luke 15:11-24).

Great Lent is the time for us to “regain our birthright of beauty.” The God-given gifts of repentance and confession, aided by prayer and fasting and almsgiving, are at our disposal. What a great time of

opportunity, what a season of hope and joy! The loving Lord wants our union with Him so much that He provides us with yet another chance. The choice is ours, as it was for Adam and Eve so long ago. The choice is ours, as it has been for the saints in every generation. We must choose to enter again the new life, to desert the dark coldness of a life outside of Christ. Our hearts may have previously frozen, but King Solomon prophesied a spiritual springtime:

Behold, winter is past, and rain is gone, it has departed.

The flowers are seen in the land,
the time of pruning has arrived;
the voice of the dove is heard in our land
(Song of Songs 2:11-12).

We are reminded of our previous withered life in bondage to sin in the sight of winter. Every spring we rejoice over our life in Christ in the sight of the new life brought at the Paschal season. We should make use of our awareness of the changing of the seasons to call us to thanksgiving and to remind us that Great Lent is the “time of pruning,” of refining ourselves in Christ, of renewing the image and likeness of God through repentance and confession. Let us embrace with joy this opportunity to regain our “birthright of beauty.” ❖

Georgian Immigrants in SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church in Manville, NJ

by Ekaterine Margiani, Parish Council

“Qriste Agsdga! Cheshmaritad Agsdga!” This is how “Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen!” sounds in Georgian.

In SS. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church of Manville, among the English, Russian, Greek, Romanian and many others, Georgian hymns are sung too. It’s been over ten years since Georgian immigrants have started to come here. Today, Georgians are an active part of the church parish. Besides regular church services, they also have a molieben in Georgian on Thursday nights. On Saturdays, in the church hall, children have Georgian dance classes and language lessons. Professional teachers come from New York to teach children all about Georgia. Georgians know that the doors of Ss. Peter and Paul church are open to them. Parish rector Archpriest James (Parsells) and church parishioners have always supported the Georgian community.

It all started many years ago when Georgian immigrants moved to Central Jersey area. At the beginning, the Georgians had some doubts about our church. They noticed that the church calendar was different and some details seemed unusual, like having chairs in the church. But the beauty and atmosphere in the church attracted them. Warm greetings from the priest and the parishioners made them feel comfortable. Father James was aware that the Georgians were new to the country and needed special attention. He knew well that, even though Georgia was one of the oldest Christian countries, it also was one of the former Soviet countries where practicing a religion was banned for decades. As a result, most Georgians were raised atheists and had no church experience. He understood that people with no religious upbringing may not hear God’s call and could easily retreat back to unfaithfulness. It was important to receive people as they were and help them find their own way to God.

The compassion of the parishioners also played a significant role in attracting the Georgians to this church. A good number of them could easily relate to the Georgians for they also come from Eastern European countries. Besides this, they knew well from their own family experience, how the first generation of immigrants struggle in establishing a

new life in America. The church parishioners knew that the Georgians are working hard for living, supporting their families back in the country and educating themselves in their faith and were very supportive.

Through the years, the relationship between SS. Peter and Paul church and Georgians has grown deeper. Georgians wanted to introduce their country to Americans. A couple years ago the church held a



(L – R) Father Saba, Father James, Metropolitan Dimitri, Father Peter and Georgian-Americans after molieben to the Mother of God.

Georgian Festival. It began with a Georgian molieben, celebrated by Father Alexander (Tandilashvili), the priest of St. Nino’s Georgian Orthodox Church in Brooklyn, accompanied by a professional Georgian chorus. It continued with an exposition of educational materials about the country and ended with delicious Georgian food and wines. Since then, Father Alexander has done festal services for Georgians: St. Nino, the Equal to the Apostles and St. George’s (patron saint of Georgia) days were celebrated here. Father Alexander was the first Georgian priest to establish Georgian churches around the United States and even in Canada. Soon, he will officially open St. Nino’s Georgian Church in Staten Island.

Jacob's
well
Spring 2011

Why are There Two Orthodox Churches at 605 Washington Avenue in Manville?

by Symeon Combs, Parish Council

SS. Peter and Paul in Manville, New Jersey, is approaching its 100th anniversary (2015), and through the Grace of the Holy Spirit is embracing new and exciting opportunities for missionary work and for Christian fellowship.

Founded by immigrants from a variety of Orthodox communities in Eastern Europe, the Ukraine and Russia, we are now a church for those of all ages, ethnicities, and races, for both families and singles who are searching for the anchor of a Christian community in our rootless society.

But given that mission, chanting in what sounds like Egyptian Arabic is still surprising! Just after one enters Ss. Peter and Paul's social hall, there is a staircase leading up to the upper hall, and almost every day soft, mellifluous sounds of Coptic chanting, flowing with sweetness and honey, drift down from the services of a unique, vital community that has become a beloved neighbor of our parish.

St. Mary & St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church reaches out to Somerset and Hunterdon Counties in New Jersey and draws parishioners from as far as Eastern Pennsylvania. Fr. Antonious Tanious and his able assistant priest Fr. John Rizkalla serve a community of several hundred people.

St. Mary and St. Athanasius, a rapidly growing Egyptian-American community in central Jersey, plans to build a new church in the Somerset County area, but needed a temporary home for several years in order to maintain a regular cycle of services, as well as Christian education and fellowship, until preparation could be completed for a new church location. That's where Ss. Peter and Paul came in!

Fr. James Parsells was approached by the Coptic community with a request to rent our upper social hall as a church for a multi-year period. It wasn't exactly a new

concept, since we had already rented the space to St. Elizabeth the New Martyr (ROCOR) in Rocky Hill, NJ, while their church was being renovated. But this proposal had many new implications and challenges—the St. Mary and St. Athanasius community was three times our size and growing, they would need almost the total use of the upper hall, and, of course, we hadn't been in communion since the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451 A.D.! Plus, lots more cars in a residential area.

Even though giving up the principal use of the upper hall would change some of our parish's events, practices and traditions, Ss. Peter and Paul was willing to give it a try to express our solidarity with another

Christian community and as a gesture of support to the Coptic Orthodox, given the severe persecution they are undergoing in their homeland. Once Fr. James secured the blessing of then Metropolitan Herman in his role as Bishop of New York and New Jersey, then a team led by Fr. Deacon Paul Sokol, Senior Warden Peter Bakaletz, and Junior Warden Augustine Kachek negotiated a lease with St. Mary and St. Athanasius. Final agreements involved a number of partners and friends, including VFW Post 2290 across Washington Avenue from our church, which is providing parking on the weekends for St. Mary and St. Athanasius parishioners. St. Mary and St.

Athanasius took up residence in February 2009, and the community is now beginning its third year in Manville.

The past two years have had a few "bumps," so to speak, as our two communities have gotten to know each other and to adjust to complex schedules of services and meetings. The lease and rental arrangements were reviewed at the beginning of the second year, and both communities are moving forward in Christian fellowship as this historic relationship develops in richness and complexity.

We have been inspired by the commitment and devotion of Coptic Christians to their faith. Their



(L – R) Bishop Michael, Father Antonious Tanious, and Fr. Deacon Paul Sokol in the upper social hall at Ss. Peter and Paul's, currently the sanctuary of St. Mary and St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church.

activity and energy is a model for any church community, and our Egyptian-American neighbors (and their American converts from heterodox backgrounds) display the warmth, friendliness and piety so characteristic of the Coptic Orthodox. Fathers Antonius and John have become close friends of our parish, and we were pleased to have them as special guests when Bishop Michael of New York and New Jersey made his first official visit to Ss. Peter and Paul in November 2010. At a reception for Bishop Michael prior to the Vigil Service on November 20th, Father James and Father Antonius spoke with His Grace about the special, synergistic relationship that is developing between the two parishes.

Many of our parishioners are learning more about the challenges that Copts are facing in Egypt, and offering prayers for them. We are grateful for this opportunity to serve another Christian community and to help spread the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in a unique partnership. In the future, there are limitless opportunities for cooperation with educational activities, special speakers and retreat-leaders as we learn to embrace our shared beliefs and yet respect our differences. Someday St. Mary and St. Athanasius will build their new church, but our ties of love will continue.✦

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Over the last few years, Georgian immigrants have grown in their Faith. People in New Jersey wished to have a Georgian priest and listen to the gospel and hymns in their native language. Therefore, they asked Father Peter (Kruashvili), the priest from Philadelphia, to serve a *molieben* in Manville. He was ready to come as often as needed. Father Peter is very energetic and devoted priest. His simple personality makes him easily approachable by people. We asked Father James permission to celebrate Georgian services in his church. He said that every Georgian is welcome to his church but he also understands that hearing prayers in one's native language has a special power over people and the opportunity should not be missed. We were amazed by his great personality. Georgians are very grateful to him.

Now, Georgians from Central Jersey come to Manville to hear prayers in the Georgian language. They actively participate in service and even formed a small choir. Some of the people received the gifts of Confession and Holy Communion for first time in their lives. The inner need for God had touched their souls. Even though Georgians lived for many years

without religion, they always knew and respected their country's history which tells that thousands of Georgians have sacrificed their lives to keep the Christian faith alive in Georgia. Today, all we can do is be a good Christian and spread around us our share of love and kindness.

In October of 2010, Metropolitan Dimitri of Batumi and Lazeti Diocese of the Georgia and Georgian churches in the USA and Canada visited our church. He celebrated a *molieben* to the Mother of God, together with the visiting priests and a very large number of Georgian Orthodox Christians. His Eminence expressed his gratitude to Fr. James and spoke to the people about matters of Faith. Everyone was anointed with blessed oil from the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem.

We also wanted to reach out to every church and each priest who opened their hearts and their church doors to the Georgian immigrants. We hear many stories about them and are greatly appreciative of them. We believe we all are one in our Christian Orthodox Faith. God Bless You All!✦

Visitation of the Kursk Icon in Brick, NJ

On Friday, February 4, Bishop Michael served a *moleben* before the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God at Annunciation Church in Brick, NJ. His Grace was co-served by New Jersey Dean Archpriest Samuel Kedala, Eastern American Diocesan (ROCOR) secretary Archpriest Serge Lukianov, parish rector Archpriest Gary Joseph Breton, and a multitude of local clergy. Many faithful turned out to venerate the miraculous icon of the Mother of God.✦



**Jacob's
well**
Spring 2011

Georgian Choir Visits Dix Hills

by Fr. John Klingel

Jacob's
well
Spring 2011

On Sunday, January 23, 2011 the choir of St. Nino's Georgian Orthodox Church visited St. Andrew's Church in Dix Hills, NY and performed an hour-long concert of Georgian sacred music. St. Andrew's Church was filled and the parishioners greeted visitors who traveled from neighboring parishes in Brooklyn, where St. Nino's is located, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk counties. The event gave all of those gathered the chance to hear authentic Georgian chants and songs, which represent a unique and traditional Orthodox culture that beautifully complements both Byzantine and Russian Church singing. The ten singers who constitute the choir, under the direction of Luiza Tsaava, are truly gifted and talented musicians, whose love and deep piety is apparent in the devotion with which they offer these sung prayers.

Immediately before the concert began, St. Andrew's own choir director, Lasha Kvetenadze, a talented composer, musician and conductor himself, gave an introduction to the tradition of Georgian polyphonic singing. In addition to the fourteen hymns that the choir performed, Lasha asked them to demonstrate some of the different, local variations

within the canon of Georgian music. While the music was unfamiliar to many, as was the Georgian language, it was nonetheless beautiful and profoundly arresting. Many in the audience were heard to remark afterwards about the ethereal singing of *The Lamentations*, which moved some to tears. It was a clear example of what power a church choir can muster and the liturgical role that music fulfills when well rehearsed and executed.

After the choir had completed its singing, Fr. Alexander Tandilashvili, the Rector of St. Nino's Church, spoke about the history of the Georgian Church and some of the challenges that it faces today. Following his remarks, all retired to the Church Hall where a memorial meal had been prepared by the family of Peter Petorak, it being the anniversary of his repose. Although the seating was tight, everyone found a place to sit and shortly thereafter, the singing began again. This time it consisted of a selection of Georgian folk music, with accompaniment on traditional string and pipe instruments. Children were dancing between the tables and everyone was delighted.

St. Nino's has just purchased a building on Staten Island and is in the process of converting it to use as a church. Naturally we had wanted this event to be a fundraiser to assist them with this project. When the collection that had been taken was counted, Fr. Alexander was handed an envelope containing \$1,200. Everyone was pleased that our efforts met with such success. Please visit our website at www.standrewsoca.org to read more about this and see additional photos of the event. ❖



The Russian Gift of Life

Doctors at Winthrop-University Hospital in Mineola last month performed surgery – Sergei Massaev's fourth - to replace his malfunctioning valve with a new, high-tech mechanical one. The surgery, they predict, will help add decades to the teenager's life. The Russian Gift of Life was founded in Sea Cliff, NY in 1989 and incorporated on October 18, 1991 as a 501 (C)(3) tax-exempt corporation. Since its founding, the Russian Gift of Life has grown from a handful of dedicated volunteers to an internationally recognized charitable organization. Thanks to the compassion of its donors and volunteers, The Russian Gift of Life has raised over \$1.3 million to save the lives of some 1,000 children. For more information please contact Michael Yurieff, Executive Director, mvy@rgol.org. ❖



Church Growth Boot Camp

August 1-3, 2011

*Dormition of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church
Binghamton, New York*

What Is Church Growth Boot Camp?

- Practical hands-on training and skills developing workshops for parishes concerned about their overall health, growth, and direction
- Training in everything from managing change to parish core values, vision and mission to identifying, evaluating and implementing the right ministries and ministry leaders
- Understanding how to undertake a Godly process of strategic planning...and how not to!
- A must for the person who wants to serve their parish and diocese in this important area of parish ministry

Presenters:

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff is the Diocese of New York and New Jersey's Director of the Commission of Mission and Evangelism and Rector of St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church on Long Island. Fr. Jonathan has been a priest in the OCA since 1993, having been graduated from St. Vladimir's Seminary in 1986. He has been a coach and presenter for Natural Church Development (NCD) since 2003 as well as a presenter for the Church Multiplication Training Center and OCA "Boot Camp" from 1998 to 2002, and a member of the OCA's Department of Evangelization since 2003. He is also a CoachNet Certified Coach and a member of NCD International's Advisory Board. He has also twice served on the board of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

Fr. John Reeves is Rector of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in State College, PA, and previously served in Pharr, TX at St. George Church. He is a nationally known speaker on evangelism and church growth and previously served as the Director of the Office of Church Growth and Evangelization from 1996 to 2002, during which time the original Church Growth Boot Camp was designed and launched, eventually training over 150 clergy and laypeople in over 40 parishes in the U.S. and Canada. Fr. John has also served on the board of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen is a 1996 alumnus of St. Vladimir's and a 2002 alumnus of Drew University,

where he received his doctorate in Liturgical Studies with an emphasis in Homiletics. Fr. Sergius has served in parishes in the Diocese of New England since 2000, and he currently is the chair of the Committee on Evangelization and Revitalization for the diocese. In the fall of 2011 he will be assuming a full-time position at St. Vladimir's as Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric, will serve as Director of Field Education overseeing programs in prison, hospital, and parish ministry, and will also be overseeing SVS's new D.Min program.

Note: Bishop Michael (Dahulich) will be in attendance at the conference for all three days.

Boot Camp Training Modules:

- Managing Change and the Changing Parish - Dealing with fear and apprehension
- Clarifying Values - Discovering what we believe in, and why
- Focusing Vision - What would God do in our parish if He could have His way?
- Discovering Mission - Moving vision to reality
- Developing Ministry that Works - Identifying what we should be doing...and should not be!
- Growing Fervent Spirituality - Addressing the heart of the matter
- Mobilize and Empower Leaders and Teams - Designing teams for mission and ministry
- Preach the Gospel, Use Words if Necessary - Evangelizing the community with deeds of love
- See How We Love One Another! - Strengthening loving relationships and building a culture of caring through fellowship groups
- Planning with a Purpose - Establishing timeline and milestones for the next 12 months and beyond through Shared Vision

Boot Camp Information:

Registration \$99 per person - includes training, workbook, materials, lunches all three days and dinners on Monday and Tuesday. Check the diocesan website after Pascha www.nynjoca.org for more information or email Father Ivanoff at frjonathan@hotmail.com. ❖



Our Seminarians and their families were welcomed and introduced following the Diocesan Council Meeting on February 28, 2011 at the Center in Bronxville, NY.

Seminarians at St. Tikhon's Seminary



Deacon Matthew Markewich

My name is Matthew and my wife is Rebekah. We have one child, Katherine, who is eight months old, and we are expecting a son in June. Our home parish is St. Basil's Orthodox Church in Watervliet, NY. I got my Bachelor's in European history, and Rebekah got her Master's in the same subject with a focus on Medieval history. We came to seminary directly after graduating college and getting married in July 2009.

Neither of us was raised in the Church. I come from a secular background, though I went to a Lutheran church when I was in elementary school. In high school I became an evangelical Christian after discovering for myself that God was real. After about two years as an evangelical, I wondered why I believed my church was correct when it was only, as a Protestant movement, at most 500 years old. I went on a search to discover the original Christianity, and discovered and believed in the Orthodox Church. I was chrismated in December 2006.

Rebekah was raised Pentecostal. Both of her parents are pastors in a non-denominational Pentecostal church. Once, she read a Pentecostal book that encouraged living as the early Church lived. This started a desire in her to find out what that early Church was. While in college, she took many courses on Western Church history and became open to the idea of becoming Roman Catholic. Then we met, and she learned about Orthodoxy. Over a period of a few months she believed and joined the Church in October 2008.

NOTE: Matthew was ordained to the diaconate on March 12th in his home parish.



Fr. Chrispin Obico

I was born in Kodokoto, Uganda on July 4 1965, to a family of Mariko Okallebo and Aana Akello. I am the eighth of nine children of whom 8 are living. All the children, including myself, were baptized in the Roman Catholic faith. My primary education, junior, and major seminary formation were in Uganda. I also had one year of what is known as spiritual and pastoral vocation orientation or exploration after which I continued with seminary formation and education.

I was ordained to the diaconate in the second year of theological studies and to the priesthood after the third year, on April 1983. Two years later, I came to the USA for further studies in theology which I completed at the Maryknoll School of Theology with a Masters degree. Thereafter, I took another program in Business Administration at St. John's University, where I graduated with a Bachelors degree. I continued serving in different Roman Catholic dioceses in this country, until I decided to join the Orthodox Church. I am now taking some courses in theology and liturgics at St. Tikhon's Seminary.



Roman Ostash

I was born on May 27, 1984 in Sambir, Ukraine, and raised in a religious, educated family. I was baptized as a baby and raised in the Orthodox Church. From a young age, I constantly participated in religious services at the local church, the Nativity of the Holy Mother of God. From 1990-2001, I attended schools in the Lviv Region. After graduation I worked at a local Computer Service Company for 2 years. In 2009 I began to study at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity Program).

My father, Very Rev. Bohdan Ostash, is acting rector of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Alpha, NJ.

Seminarians at St. Vladimir's Seminary



**Chandler
David Poling**

Chandler David Poling is a second year seminarian. His wife, Emilita, teaches English to adults in Harlem.

Their two children are Elias (6 years old) and Mariam (8 years old). Before moving to St. Vladimir's, they lived in New York City and attended the NY/NJ Diocesan Cathedral on 2nd Street. They look forward to remaining and serving the Church in the NY/NJ Diocese.



**William
(Seraphim) Joa**

William (Seraphim) Joa and his wife, Julie, have one married son and two grandchildren. William is "twice

retired," a second year Master of Divinity student, and seeking ordination. After graduation from SVS he would like to return to his home parish, Holy Trinity, East Meadow to serve as needed.



Jeffrey David Hoff

Jeffrey David Hoff is a part-time, first-year seminarian at SVS. Jeff was baptized by Fr Sergius Kuharsky and grew up in the Diocese of NY/NJ. He served as an altar boy during his youth and now, together with his wife, Tatiana, is a volunteer and Trustee of St Andrew's Camp and a photographer for the Church. He is also a church school teacher of the 7 and 8 year old class at SVS. The couple met through their mission trips to Alaska in 2004 through the OCA youth department and the OCMC.



Fr. John W. Culbreath-Frazier

Fr John was born and raised in Fort Mill, South Carolina. He met his wife, Mandy, at Lenoir-Rhyne College in North Carolina, through their membership in the Church and because of their mutual interest in community service. Dn. John was received into the Orthodox Church at Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He completed a Clinical Pastoral Education internship and is pursuing CPE residency to be a full-time hospital chaplain. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 12 by His Grace Seraphim (Sigrist), former bishop of Sendai (OCA), and he would like to continue his ministry in our Diocese.

The Diocesan Diaconal Formation Program

The Diocesan Diaconal Formation Program was inaugurated on September 11, 2010. As the Program's twelve enrolled students now progress diligently and rapidly through a second semester, it is apparent that God's blessings are upon the endeavor. Reflecting upon the formulation and inauguration of this program in our diocese, Bishop +Michael states: "What is essential about this Diocesan Diaconate Program, established by Saint Tikhon's Seminary, is personal formation. A deacon or a priest, for that matter, cannot be formed personally, spiritually, or even liturgically from only textbooks or on-line coursework. Formation in the tradition of our spiritual fathers, the saints, can only be done in person." For more information please visit <http://nynjoca.org/files/2011/Release-2011.6.1.pdf>

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Church Celebrates Diamond Jubilee

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church in Clifton, NJ celebrated the 75th Anniversary of its founding on the weekend of November 6th & 7th, 2010. Great Vespers and a Panikhida were served on November 6th, followed by refreshments and fellowship in the Fr. Lucas Olchovy Memorial Hall.



community. Under the leadership of its founder-The Very Rev. Lucas Olchovy, as well as his successors-The Very Rev. Stephen Kachur and The Very Rev. Dimitri Oselinsky, the parish continued its mission, striving to be a haven of peace, hope, charity and love. The current Pastor- Rev. Stephen Evanina, hopes to carry on this traditon: "I am only the fourth priest in the 75 year history of this parish, which is a true testament to the loving, charitable spirit of our parishioners. It's a beautiful parish in a wonderful city!"

For more information about the parish and a full photo report on the 75th Anniversary, visit www.holyassumptionclifton.org.

"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:17)✦

His Grace, Bishop Michael led the celebration the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 7th, during which he awarded the Rev. Stephen Evanina the privilege of wearing the Gold Cross. Both services were well attended by both parishioners and friends of the community, as well as several clergy from throughout the area. The Grand Banquet was held at The Brownstone in Paterson, New Jersey.

Established in the Athenia section of Clifton in 1935, the mission of the parish has always been to be a true witness of Orthodox Christianity in the



Bishop Michael's Visit to West Point

Bishop Michael made his first archpastoral visit to St Martin's Chapel at West Point on January 23, 2011. From left to right: LTC Douglas Matty, Cadet Jacob Cook, Maj. James Enos, Cadet Joshua Pcsolyar, Alexander Stransky, Thomas Matty, Bp Michael, Fr Joseph Frawley, Johnathan Matty, Derek (Bp M's driver), Cadet McKinsey Hulen, Cadet Alexander Kendl, and Maj. Anthony Marinos.✦



Diocesan Forum for Church Musicians

On February 12, 2011, the Diocesan Music Committee and Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne, New Jersey, hosted a Forum for Church Musicians with His Grace, Bishop Michael. More than seventy musicians attended from parishes as far away as Syracuse, NY. His Grace said his goal at the forum was to “listen and learn,” but he also provided comments on such topics as the necessity for young people in Diocesan music programs, questions concerning a standard English translation, and the need for the Diocese to provide good choir director preparation and training.

The agenda included a panel discussion by Fr. John Shimchick (Holy Cross Church, Medford NJ), Bill Kraftician (Holy Trinity Church, Randolph NJ) and Tanya Jelenevsky Tjoa (Holy Transfiguration Church, Pearl River NY). They shared their experiences and perceptions concerning music in the Diocese. Lively discussions involved numerous Forum attendees and centered on the desirability of rubrical consistency in the Diocese and the availability of suitable music for choirs of varying competence. One result was His Grace’s commitment to use the Diocesan website to help meet choir music needs.

Basil Kozak (SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River NJ) made an afternoon presentation on working with youth musically; he shared experiences, provided tips, and led the group in demonstrating suitably melodic music for youth choirs. Attendees reacted favorably to the day’s events. His Grace welcomes more opportunities for our diocesan musicians to meet, share, and to learn from one another.❖

Schemamonk Constantine (Cavarnos) 1918-2011

by Fr Joseph Frawley

The noted author and lecturer Schemamonk Constantine (Cavarnos) fell asleep in the Lord on the morning of March 3, 2011 at St Anthony’s Monastery in Arizona, and was buried there the same day.

Dr Cavarnos was born in Boston in 1918, and graduated from Harvard University, where he also received a Doctorate in Philosophy. He taught at several colleges in America, and contributed articles and reviews to various publications through the years. In 1956, he founded the Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in order to promote interest in Orthodox spirituality, philosophy, and modern Greek culture.

He lectured in schools, seminaries, and parishes in this country and abroad, where his clear, lucid presentations were always well received.



Choir members from the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross with Bishop Michael, Josef Gulka, director, Diana Pasca, Fr John Shimchick, Natalka Weismantel, and Greg Sapnar.

Dr Cavarnos wrote nearly one hundred books including volumes on philosophy, theology, and the very popular series of Modern Orthodox Saints. His first book *A Dialogue Between Bergson, Aristotle, and Philologos* was published in 1949. His latest, *The Philokalia, VOL. 2*, was released just this year.

Although he began his career with philosophical studies, he progressed to the true philosophy, which is how the Church Fathers describe monasticism. Dr Cavarnos admired the monastic life, and wrote several books on the subject. Even while living and working as a layman, he seemed to be detached from the world. The late Greek Orthodox Archbishop Michael used to call him “a monk living in the world.” Meeting him, one sensed that here was a man of true piety and prayer.

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A Vision for Our Future

Jacob's
well
Spring 2011

A “Vision for Our Future” [V-FOF] and the “Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors” [DDB] program officially launched at the beginning of this year with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop +Michael. As presented by His Grace in his address to the Diocesan Assembly, and unanimously approved for inclusion in the 2011 diocesan budget, the V-FOF initiative and DDB program can have a profoundly positive impact on the life of the diocese.

The reality is quite simple: we need to fund the vitally important ministries of our diocese even though economic times are difficult and the diocesan budget is insufficient to meet the challenge. It is not the time, as Bishop +Michael had pledged, to raise the assessments contributed to the diocese from individual parishes. The diocese (like parishioners, households, and parishes) must “make due” with the limited resources available.

How, then, will we be able to fund three specific areas of upmost concern: (1) providing scholarships to the future deacons, priests, and perhaps bishops who will serve our Church and are now seminary students, (2) offering support to new mission parishes in areas where the Gospel must be preached in the “fullness of faith” found in the Body of Christ, and (3) sharing one another’s burdens by helping older parishes that are struggling due to the loss of membership and financial hardship?

The answer is to seek out those who, thanks to the blessings God has bestowed upon them, are willing and able to make sacrificial gifts toward the work of the Church. The request is sincere and genuine; the response is voluntary and sincere. That is at the heart of fulfilling the “Vision for Our Future” though the generosity of “Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors” who contribute whatever they are able to build up and sustain the Body of Christ through one (or all) of the identified areas of need: seminarians, missions, or existing parishes. As each contribution is made, the DDB member is asked to specifically designate the area to which they want their support to go. Without exception,

each donation will be designated and used for the intended purpose. The funds are kept and accounted for with great diligence and transparency. On-going reports of our progress and fruits will be reported on the diocesan website.

In launching this DDB initiative, His Grace stated: “It is my fervent hope that the clergy and laity of our Diocese will embrace

this Vision for Our Future initiative because: (1) it is a serious diocesan effort to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ; (2) it is designed to help balance this year’s diocesan budget without increasing the annual assessment; (3) it is a move away from the assessment system toward a more Scriptural approach to giving — those who know

they have been blessed by God are being asked to share their blessings for the ministries of the Church. If our clergy will publicize this effort on a regular basis and ask an interested layperson to chair the effort in each parish, I am confident that, with the blessing of the Lord, this initiative can and will be an instrument for His glory.”

A special webpage has been created for this effort. It may be found on homepage of the diocese at nynjoca.org in the “Vision for Future” link. All of the essential information about V-FOF and DDB will be found there. And, those who desire to participate in the program and initiative will find it easy to do so! A “donate now” feature allows anyone with a credit card to make a one-time or recurring contribution through a secure website; or a simple mouse-click will allow anyone to print a brochure with a donation form that can be mailed with a check to the diocese.

A listing of current DDB participants may be found on the diocesan website. The number of DDB participants is growing daily. The program is intended to last throughout 2011. There is much work to be done; many fruits to be cultivated. If you are so blessed, consider becoming a Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor. If you have already made a sacrificial gift, thank you! ❖



Gift & Grace: Stories of Orthodox Clergy and Their Wives

by Fr John Shimchick

Stories can help us understand the formation of individuals, communities, and our Faith. They can teach, change, and perhaps even save us. They can bring into focus and clarify the key moments of our lives. Over the course of a year I once worked through Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, discovering in the last pages like Raskolnikov that something had happened in the process and I knew I was loved and in love.



Getting older I find myself more interested in knowing about the paths of those who have come before me. My friend Fr John Jillions and I returned home late one night considering the life of a priest whose funeral we had just attended – and how little we had known about him prior to that service. So, we committed ourselves to visiting and learning more about the older priests around us. Sometimes we had just our memories or a pad of paper that documented our conversations, but on other occasions we brought a tape recorder or even a video camera.

Thanks to a class on “Intergenerational Storytelling” offered by WHY, my local public broadcasting station in Philadelphia, I was stimulated to think about this project in a new and more organized way. With encouragement from Bishop Michael and Diocesan funding I went to the WHY studios with Fr Serge and Faith Kuharsky to begin what I hope will be the “prototype” of this effort to document the lives of our senior clergy and their wives.

The title, “*Gift and Grace*,” comes from the synthesis of three interrelated observations about the priesthood and marriage: 1) Priesthood is a gift (“I give your priesthood as a gift” (*Numbers 18:7*); 2) Priesthood is an expression of God’s grace (“by the power of the Holy Spirit enable me, who am endowed with the grace of the priesthood, to stand before this, Your holy table” – *Priest’s Prayer during the Cherubim Hymn*); 3) Gift and Grace are also essential affirmations about the foundation of marriage. In exploring Fr Serge and Faith’s photo archives we came across the following letter sent to them by Fr Alexander Schmemmann, apologizing for not being able to attend their wedding service:

1/26/56

My dear, dear Serge,

I was very happy when I got the news of your forthcoming marriage. May God bless you and your future wife, and may also this new life - which you are beginning now - lead you even further, to a more

complete, more total service of Christ and of his Church.

Marriage and ministry - interwoven - can be the means “to a more complete, more total service of Christ and his Church.”

Our format has three parts: 1) an interview with the priest; 2) with his wife; 3) with both of them. We hope to involve as many of our senior clergy as possible, ideally bringing all of them and their wives together for a kind of pastoral “jam session.”

Depending on the funding I would like to continue working with the staff of WHY, which will allow us to maintain a high standard and excellent quality (each finished set of interviews will cost around \$200.00). Perhaps other production options will be identified.

I hope as well that this may encourage similar oral history projects within our parishes. We know that our seniors represent a unique and irreplaceable treasury of knowledge and experience, and of witness – a kind of “martyria” of love and dedication to God, pastoral work, and love. Let’s all commit to this effort of documenting and learning from the lives of those who have served our Church with such energy, clergy and lay people, married and those who are single. During our current times of suspicion and cynicism it’s important to be reminded of those stories around us that have led “to a further, more complete, more total service of Christ and his Church.” The stories are out there.

The interviews with Fr Serge and Faith Kuharsky can be found on the homepage of our Diocesan website: nynjoca.org (“Interviews”).✿

Jacob's
well
Spring 2011

The Spiritual Lives of Soldiers:

Part II - At War

by Fr David Alexander

I am a chaplain of Marines. I eat with Marines, run with Marines, sweat with Marines, freeze with Marines. I sleep next to Marines in the dirt, jump out of airplanes with them, crawl through mud and sand with armor and gear and more or less suffer alongside of Marines every day in training. I pray with them, for them, over them. I go to war with them. I listen to them every day and laugh with them and bear with their rough edges, and as a result I am there with them in the moment of crisis – be it physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual. We have had plenty of crises lately. My Marines and I have just recently come home from Helmand Province in Afghanistan.

I have been asked to share a few thoughts here on the spiritual life of warriors in combat, and I will do so in my own simple way. It seems to me that in combat Marines need, more than anything else, to be able to live with the profound knowledge that God is never far away, but near. They need to know that God is active in protecting them, and in protecting their families back home, and that what they are doing in war is not irrevocably driving them away from God. This is, by the grace of God, the knowledge that I humbly share with them each day, as best as I can.

In the middle of long deployments, no matter how strong a warrior's faith may be, everyone seems to go through times when God feels far away. Comrades fall, the faces of loved ones back home grow dim, and every miserable day seems to blend into the next. Chaplains often find that their most profound and fulfilling work is to simply be out and about among the Marines, praying with them, encouraging them, saying a blessing before every convoy, every patrol, and every combat mission. In the military we call this ministry of presence, and in essence it is a reflection of our Lord's incarnation as

a function of the priesthood – the priest as chaplain is never far away from the men of his Battalion or Regiment, and calls to mind the presence of God wherever he goes. For the Orthodox Marines he serves with, he does even more, prayerfully offering the sacraments, which in the mystery of faith unites them to God.

Chaplains are asked to pray in combat far more often than they could have imagined would be the case, because of the special spiritual vulnerability of his warriors in prolonged times of crisis, fear, and loneliness. I have seen some Marines experience positive spikes in their prayer at the beginning of a deployment. They turn to God more fervently and often than they have perhaps in many years, and find deep consolation for their souls. However, as the tour continues, and the pain and fear they are experiencing deepens, that newfound comfort in prayer can begin to weaken or wane, and they may lose heart. It takes a very deep

rootedness in prayer to carry us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and it is very difficult to try to grow those roots in the season of crisis. Access to God through prayer is an incredible gift, because it reminds us of His nearness to us in every season and place – even in that wild, dangerous, and weary land called Afghanistan.

Along with their chaplains and prayer, Marines love angels, imprecatory Psalms, and patron Saints, and gain from them a strong sense of protection. One of our platoon sergeants was leading a convoy in Northern Helmand Province when he and his Marines came under attack from Taliban forces. When he heard the first explosion go off, he began praying, and said later that he strongly felt the presence of angels around his truck, around the convoy, and even in his truck. He says he was sure they



Fr David at St Andrew's Orthodox Church in Kandahar, Afghanistan (built by Romanian Orthodox soldiers).

were there. A second explosion struck his truck a moment later, and although he sustained a fairly severe injury that required an emergency medevac once the situation stabilized, no one else in his vehicle was injured. When I visited him in the hospital he could speak of nothing else but the fact that the angels were with him, and kept the other Marines in his truck safe. This became one of the favorite stories among people of faith in our Battalion. Marines love hearing about and talking about angels, because they see them as the direct protection of God – powerful, unseen protection and help in the face of many dangers, troubles, and temptations. Talking about angels is another thing that reminds warriors of the closeness of God.



Now, whoever said that there are no atheists in foxholes hasn't been to Afghanistan lately. I have a number of good combat Marines that claim to be atheists, and several more who simply want nothing to do with God, even if they don't necessarily argue against His existence. Nevertheless, the majority of Marines are very interested in being close to God, and some think about God almost about as often as they think of home, or their own mortality (which, if you're wondering is usually very often).

Living with Marines is not easy. They are often crass, tough as nails, coarse, and outspoken. They work in the worst places on Earth, fighting to make

it a better place in the way that they understand things. The chaplain lives with them and attempts to pray with them and for them without ceasing. The Holy Martyr Archpriest Vasily Martiysz, an Orthodox chaplain for Polish forces before his martyrdom under communism, once said of his difficulties in ministry: "I will not run away. Christ did not run." And those are words that American Orthodox chaplains take to heart. We attempt to unite men to God, by the grace of God, in whatever way we can, and in the midst of war. We ask that you pray for us, and for the men under our spiritual charge. Glory to Jesus Christ!✠

Fr. David Alexander is a priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese and a chaplain with the United States Marine Corps. Several years ago while on sabbatical from the military to pursue a ThM degree at St Vladimir's he ministered to soldiers at Ft Dix and the McGuire Air Force base in New Jersey. He and his wife Heather live with their daughter, Eve Marie, in coastal North Carolina. He serves on Sundays at St. Nicholas Orthodox Chapel.

*He maintains a blog on Ancient Faith Radio: **In the Valley of the Shadow of Death - A Chaplain of Marines Speaks His Heart and Mind from the Front Lines of Afghanistan.** More of his articles can be found at <http://www.antiochian.org/node/22949>*

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In the course of his career, Dr Cavarnos knew many prominent people. He has written of his long friendship with the Greek iconographer and writer, Photios Kontoglou, who brought about a revival of Byzantine iconography. He also knew some of the Orthodox Church's great Spiritual Fathers, such as Archimandrite Philotheos Zervakos.

When Dr Cavarnos lost his sight, he embraced the monastic life and was tonsured at St Anthony's Monastery in Florence, AZ. I believe he always intended to end his life in a monastery, and that this was the fulfillment of his fondest wish.

It was my privilege to know Dr Cavarnos for almost forty years. Whenever my wife and I would travel to the Boston area to visit family, we always tried to make time to visit him at his home in

Belmont, MA. He was a major influence in my life through his books, lectures, and paternal counsel. Our conversations at his home were just like his books: uplifting, edifying, and soul-profiting. His books remain as his legacy, and will continue to inspire and instruct future generations of those who seek the heavenly Kingdom.

There was an understandable sadness when I heard that he had completed the course of his earthly life. However, there is also a sense of joy because he is, I believe, with God and with all the saints who ever lived.

May the Lord be merciful to the ever-memorable servant of God, Schemamonk Constantine, and give him rest in Abraham's bosom, and number him among the just.✠

The Art of Purifying the Heart **by Tomas Spidlik**

{Translated by Liam Kelly, Convivium Press, 2010, 112 pages, \$8.95}

Reviewed by Mother Raphaela

This is an excellent, outstanding book. It is a sensitive and far-reaching dialogue between “Eastern” and “Western” traditions long separated by schism. Its author is a person who obviously spent years of prayerful attention to both traditions as well as to non-Christian traditions including Yoga. A convert from the Western Church introduced to the classical Latin and Greek languages and authors will have a distinct advantage in reading this book. A grounding in western monastic life could also be helpful, especially if it included the history of the Church and of religious life, beginning with the Scriptures, the Desert Fathers and Mothers, St. Basil, St. John Cassian, St. Benedict, on up through the likes of St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis DeSales. Orthodox with a broader “Patristic” education will be able to agree with the author’s conclusions that the Eastern theological fathers who assumed an ascetic, if not monastic, environment form a unique and necessary complement to their Western counterparts. These sources include such men as St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Theophan the Recluse, etc...

Sadly, however, few people today have had the benefit of such an education. Contemporary Orthodox Christians in particular are often sensitized to “Western” sources, unwilling to look at them long enough to find out whether or not they contain and convey any truth. Sadly, again, this is producing a church culture that tends to be parochial, limited and far from the One, holy, Catholic Church of the Orthodox Nicene Creed. Even Orthodox seminary graduates who may have a broader education and an academic introduction to Scripture and “The Fathers,” rarely assume an ascetic life: They along with most people living on the planet earth at this time are captives of “the media,” the constant noise in external environments, the seeming inability – or lack of freedom, self control and awareness of choices – to take at least occasional days away from cell phones, internet, television and the constant bombardment of subliminal messages that covetousness, acquisitiveness, competitiveness and carnal desire (among other fallen tendencies) are normal

and healthy for human beings. This very real, contemporary slavery precludes the calm, peace and self control necessary to hear, digest and take to heart the message of this book that God is present at the heart of our lives – and that He matters.

Orthodox Christians who are not seminary graduates usually lack even an academic introduction to Scripture, Church History and the Fathers. If they have been blessed to have a priest who preaches regularly from the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church, they may have absorbed some of the eternal, timeless atmosphere that introduces us to the mind, the heart, the life of our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ. If they have not been so blessed, they may have only the most tenuous of links to that life in Christ – links that are God-given, certainly, since humanly speaking, many of our people have had little to go on.

Yet almost because of all this, I highly recommend this book. I hope it may bring its readers a thirst for freedom and for broader horizons. It is an excellent text to recommend to pastors and teachers, especially those compiling reading lists for those others within the context of a regular liturgical life and participation in the mysteries of initiation, reconciliation and communion within the Body of Christ. Those tested for some time with a serious commitment to a life of discipleship within a parish, family and/or monastic context will bring more to this text and will also receive more from it. It will also be helpful to people who are converts to the Church and who have struggled with their own attempts to “disciple” themselves (seekers of self-help manuals on prayer sadly do not understand that this is impossible) and therefore may have struggled with Western and/or Far Eastern theology and practice including Yoga. Of course converts who prefer to avoid the teachers and mentors needed to become disciples will miss most of this book’s message. Those who want to take root and persevere in the life of the Church, however, will find strong support and encouragement here.

Without some intellectual background and without a healthy spiritual environment, the “average” reader may miss much that is of lasting value from this

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*Yet this spiritual disease of ours, so hard to perceive and acknowledge, is more abhorrent to God than all else in us, as being the first offspring of our self-hood and self-love, and the source, root and cause of all passions and of all our downfalls and wrong-doing... **The Unseen Warfare***

Having gone to liturgy a few times a year to humor her... And already on his knees, he said something made him pray. In Confession, many years later, he said that as it got light, God spoke to him, told him to copy the letter and return it to her handbag, and work on the list as if it were true, whether he agreed or understood or not. It wasn't easy.

*May God preserve us from this disease and passion of Lucifer! - God severely reprimands those who are stricken with this passion of vain-glory and self-esteem... **The Unseen Warfare***

Five years later in bed together she asked him what had happened to him. He told her, "Someone who loved me let me get a look at myself."

*Listen to the words of the wise fathers: Peter of Damascus assures us that: "...nothing is better than to realize one's weakness and ignorance and nothing is worse than not to be aware of them." (Philokalia). St. Maximus the confessor teaches: "The foundation of every virtue is the realization of human weakness" (Philokalia) **The Unseen Warfare***

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book. The author gives a balanced approach to his subject, yet that balance is at times predicated on an understanding of background that may be outside the experience and grasp of a number of people today. Nevertheless, with God's mercy and help this book will encourage even those who do not have such background to understand many of its references.

If reading this book leads to a desire to begin developing the art of purifying the heart within the ongoing life of the Church, for engaging in dialogue with mentors and a thirst for further prayer and worship, study and discipleship, it will have done its job. Should this happen, those who return to this book after some time will find it of even more value. For purity of heart is indeed an art. As he points out, the development of any art requires education, training and practice. To those desiring to advance in this art, this is a welcome study from one already advanced in its practice.❖

So, whether the person, or the family, the parish or the diocese, the Bishop or the priest, the Church in our city or in America... Who do we have who will love us enough to tell us, to be honest and judicious in offering opportunities for self-reflection and correction, to prudently break it to us gently... And are we strong enough to listen, to trust, and to accept, to stay on our knees and pray... And to value what these sisters and brothers may have to say?

She had tried to tell him many times.

She never knew he found the letter.

*And I shall add another thing: if a man wants to realize his weakness from the actual experience of his life, let him, I do not say for many days but even for one day, observe his thoughts, words, and actions - what he thought, what he said, what he did. He will undoubtedly find that the greater part of his thoughts, words, and actions were sinful, wrong, foolish, and bad. This experiment will make him understand in practice how inharmonious and weak he is in himself... And if he sincerely wishes himself well, this understanding will make him feel how foolish it is to expect anything good from himself or to rely on himself alone. **The Unseen Warfare***

*(Note: Born in what was then Czechoslovakia in 1919, Tomas Spidlik, received his doctorate from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome in 1955. That year marked the beginning of his university career as a professor of Patristic and Eastern Spiritual Theology at various universities in Rome as well as around the world. Fr John Meyendorff in his 1988 review of the French publication of Spidlik's **The Spirituality of the Christian East** wrote, "There is no doubt in my mind that Spidlik's work is the most comprehensive general resource for the study of Eastern spirituality available today in a Western language. It is a work of great scholarship, but it also contains an authentically ecumenical appeal for better knowledge and experience of that which makes all Christians truly one." He died in 2010.)*

Mother Raphaela is the Abbess of The Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery, Otego, NY.

**Jacob's
well**
Spring 2011

The Letter

by Fr Stephen Siniari

Since the time of the transgression of our forefather, despite the weakening of our spiritual and moral powers, we are wont to think very highly of ourselves...

The Unseen Warfare

In the seventeenth year they stopped having sex and moved to separate bed-rooms. The daily stare-down was withering their marriage. And finally on their twentieth anniversary, after midnight, he went down the hallway where she lay sleeping and rifled her handbag for money and the car keys, determined to break his sobriety, his celibacy, and his loneliness.

He hadn't signed on to be a monk. He was tired of being doubted, denigrated, and dogged. Take a look around, you should have some husbands; you should've had my father. I'm a good provider. I put up with a lot. You just never listen.

Okay, sometimes when he was alone he had to admit that his marriage was rotting on the vine and he was being eaten by his own appetites. The kids seemed alienated and he couldn't understand why, but he knew one thing, he knew it wasn't his fault and he knew he deserved better and he was going out to find it.

Although our daily experience very effectively proves to us the falseness of this opinion of ourselves, in our incomprehensible self-deception we do not cease to believe that we are something, and something not unimportant.

The Unseen Warfare

In her handbag he found a legal envelope and a letter torn to shreds, blue Bic ink in her handwriting crumpled down inside her bag. He took it to his room and smoothed it out on the floor like a jigsaw puzzle, determined to put it together, bitter bit by

bit. Three loose-leaf pages, covered on both sides, six pages, twenty years of accusations against him.

The art of making art... went the line from the Stephen Sondheim song... Is putting it together bit by bit... And as he tagged the jagged pieces of their sad mosaic into place, what emerged was less like creative uplifting art and more like Emily Dickinson's Elemental Rust... ...First a cobweb on the soul... ...A cuticle of dust... Every line reduced him further to the floor. Crumbling... Dickinson said ... is not an instant's Act...

...The corpse at every funeral,

...The bride at every wedding,

...Never wrong, has all the answers,

...His own kids despise him and can't wait to get away,

...I'm so smothered, I can't breathe,

...Dominates everybody's time and business like a needy baby,

...An expert on everything, a fanatic know-it-all,

...There's nowhere to hide from his brilliance,

...And he's a snoop, he'll even find this note, I just know it,

... I feel like a fly born trapped between the window and the screen,

At every line he denied, denied, denied... Railed against her, blamed the universe, and cursed the black sky outside his bedroom window for being black. "Let them all go to hell." He wept frustrated tears of resentment... And what does she mean...?

...I may not be much but I'm all that I think about...

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Jacob's well

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