



# THE WONDERWORKER

The Official Newsletter of the Western Rite Communities of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Lent, 2016







Father Mark Rowe, Dean ROCOR Western Rite Communities

## From the Dean's Desk

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### Psalm 50: A Change of Heart

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps 50:10)*

Psalm 50 has often been seen as a classic Psalm of repentance, confession, and a plea for pardon. God in His mercy and love continually forgives us our sins, and yet we continue in sin even after receiving forgiveness. In the previous part of the Psalm, David has been praying for pardon. He now requests that the grace of the Spirit would be restored to him. He does this as if he believes he has forfeited this by his actions. These are two separate requests, often pushed together in haste. David asks firstly for remission of his sins, then petitions for sanctification.

By using the word 'create', he seemingly is saying nothing less than a miracle could effect this change, or reformation in him. He also is declaring that repentance is a gift from God. David acknowledges that we are indebted entirely to the grace of God, both for our first regeneration at Baptism, and in the event that we fall into sin, for subsequent restoration. Some may wonder, isn't David asking for too much? David has been a slave to lust, drunk with power, and stained by murder. How can he now pray for a pure heart? Isn't it too late? The answer is no. Can we be pure again once we've corrupted ourselves by sin? Yes. How can we do it? The answer is simple. We need a change of heart. We need a right spirit. These are essential for theosis. David cannot imagine lasting a day without God's clear help. Change is God's work. This is not unique to Psalm 50. The Bible exhorts us to radical steps of holiness and yet it is not any heroism on our part which will see us through. God is at work. It is interesting to note that David prays not only for remission of his sin, but for a sense of joy in sanctification. He sees recovery of holiness not as an end to his pleasure and happiness, but rather the opposite. In verse 8 he says, "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have broken rejoice." In verse 12 he also says "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." David has been missing God. He has been unhappy. This is both a result of his sin as well as the reason for his sin. Sin stems from a lack of joy. Sin also takes root if the ground is not protected by virtue.

God wills that all be saved and that we have abundant joy by His grace. Temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil are barely felt by a heart set on fire for God and full of Christian joy. A man who rejoices in God and indulging himself in the love and mercy of God is far less inclined to indulge in sin. So many of us are busy trying not to sin, but I suspect God is not especially enamored with people who simply seek to avoid breaking the rules. God, being our Heavenly Father, and we, being His wayward children can please Him more by trembling with joy at our salvation. In order to combat sin, we must cultivate virtue.

May we ask this Lenten season for the grace to put into motion our own change of heart- may we not worry about what we are 'giving up for Lent' so much as may we echo the prayer of David;

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps 50:10)*

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**St. John of Kronstadt: 'If you fall, rise and you shall be saved.' You are a sinner, you continually fall, learn also how to rise . . .**

*'If you fall, rise and you shall be saved.' You are a sinner, you continually fall, learn also how to rise; be careful to acquire this wisdom. This is what the wisdom consists in: learning by heart the psalm, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness,' inspired by the Holy Spirit to the king and prophet David, and say it with sincere faith and trust, with a contrite and humble heart. After your sincere repentance, expressed in the words of King David, the forgiveness of your sins shall immediately shine upon you from the Lord, and your spiritual powers will be at peace. The most important thing in life is to be zealous for mutual love, and not to judge anyone. Everybody shall answer for himself to God, and you must look to yourself. Beware of malice. – St. John of Kronstadt, My Life in Christ*



# TECHNOLOGY THAT CAN HELP MISSIONS AND SMALL CHURCHES

By Michael Vance of St. Brendan's Parish in Panama City, Florida

One of the problems facing most new Orthodox missions is how to give a professional face to the mission. It's a mission, not a large church with a full office staff. Most do not have a permanent facility, so they must use their home or personal cell phone as the contact number. The saddening fact is money must be prioritized and phone and office is down on the list.

This is where technology can help. Google has many free tools that can be very helpful. From Gmail to Google Calendar to Google Translate, there are many tools a starting mission can use. One tool that many people do not know about is Google Voice. Google Voice is a free tool that only requires a Gmail account.

A few of the beneficial features are:

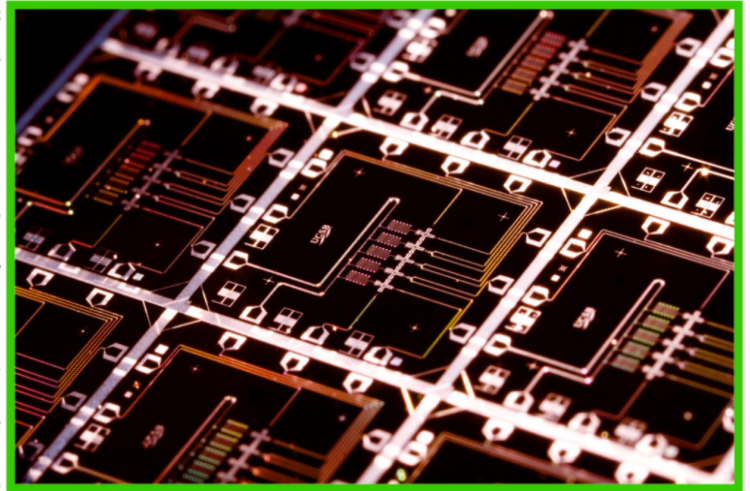
- You can choose your own number
- You can make calls from that phone number using any phone, regardless if that phone is on your list.
- When someone calls that number the call is automatically transferred to as many phones as you need.
- You can set the time the incoming calls are sent to each phone.
- You can start listening to a voicemail while the person is still leaving the message.
- Vocemails can be transcribed, then texted and emailed to where you need them.
- It can be set to a "do not disturb" sending calls directly to voicemail.
- You can have a dedicated greeting appropriate for the mission, without changing the greeting at home, work, or on your wireless.

For example, if your day job is working in an office, you can have it ring on your office phone while at work and your home phone when you are at home. You can have it ring on your home and wireless phone when you are off of work, then just your wireless phone when you are working. You can have it go straight to voicemail while you are at work if you cannot take calls. If you work nights, you do not have to worry about a 2 a.m. call waking your family; it can go to your wireless, work, or straight to voicemail. The options are endless, depending on your needs.

If you have a job that does not allow you to take personal calls, but you can get text or email, then the voicemail transcription will be a big option for you. I will admit it is not perfect. My wife and I get a good laugh at some of the transcriptions we have seen, but it is still useful. A quick look at your email or a text can let you know if it is an emergency or not, so you know if you need to call back immediately or if it can wait, without actually getting on the phone. Of course, you can listen to the voicemail, but it is nice to have options.

Don't spend money on a wireless phone dedicated to the mission. Use that money for other things you need. Just have the calls forwarded to your existing phones. You can even have the mission phone number show on your caller ID so you know it is a call meant for the mission; this allows you to answer properly.

I hope this information is helpful. Just keep in mind, you don't have to actually use Gmail for anything other than part of the phone system. Use as much or as little of Google's tools as you'd like.



Have an article you'd like to post in a future edition? Send your submissions in to the editor at [wonderworker.info@gmail.com](mailto:wonderworker.info@gmail.com). All submissions for the next issue must be received by June 1, 2016. Please keep in mind that we cannot post every submission but would like to post as many as there is room for. All pictures and content will be posted as sent. We may edit for space and subject. Thank you and God Bless!



# THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CROSS

## *An Explanation Into its Symbolism*

The most “complete” Crucifix is the so-called eight-pointed cross, which shows Christ crucified. Note that Jesus is not shown wearing a crown of thorns, but with a halo of glory, and that He is not shown in agony and suffering, but peacefully reposed. As is often the case in icons, the Slavonic inscriptions on the cross are sometimes shortened, with curly lines over the letters which are omitted. In the explanation below, I mainly give the full inscriptions.

### The Top Bar



The top bar of the Cross is the title-board which Pilate ordered to be hung in mockery over Christ's head. On this board was inscribed: , abbreviated to the Greek initials “INBI”, or the Latin initials “INRI”. In modern Russian crosses, as here, the Russian abbreviation “” is used. Around the top bar, this inscription has been supplemented with the title: *The King of Glory*

It is through the Cross that Christ rose from the dead, and the Cross is believed to be a source of miracles and healing. It is therefore appropriate that atop the cross is a towel showing the face of the living Christ, which is also believed to be miraculous.

Ministering to the Crucified Lord are two flying angels, with the inscription between them: *Angels of the Lord*

### The Middle Bar



The middle bar is that on which the Lord's hands were nailed. On this Crucifix, the *The Mother of God* – Greek, rather than Slavonic) and *St. John the Theologian* are shown as in icons of the Crucifixion, though they are not always present on crosses like these. Immediately on either side of 's head, His name is inscribed as the abbreviation . Further down the Cross, by His feet, is the Greek word “NIKA”, which means “conquer”, giving the full inscription: “Jesus Christ Conquers”. Note that, as is the custom, Christ and His Mother's name are inscribed in Greek, whereas St John's is written in Slavonic.

The inscription: *Son of God* is placed on both sides of Christ's head, and below His arms we read the inscription: *We bow down before Thy cross, O Master, and we worship Thy Holy Resurrection.*

On other Crucifixes, placed in roughly the same position as Mary and John here, are placed a picture of the sun and the moon, for *"The sun hid it's light and the moon turned to blood."* (Joel 2:31). The sun and moon are also often shown on icons of the Crucifixion.

### The Bottom Bar

The foot-brace of the cross is slanted to remind us that the Church likens the Cross to a *balance-beam of righteousness*, whereby a man is condemned or justified by how they respond to Christ's cross. Behind the foot-brace are the walls of Jerusalem, as Christ was crucified outside the city walls. Just above the footrest is the Greek word for *conquer*, completing the inscription, mentioned above.

Behind the body of Christ, on either side, are a and a on a pole made of *reed* or *cane* . The lance pierced Christ's side, whilst the sponge was soaked with gall and offered Him to drink.

By the foot of the Cross are the letters: standing for ; this is the hill outside the city gates upon which Christ was crucified. Hidden in a cave under the earth is a skull. Sometimes, the arm bones will be shown crossed, the right arm over the left, just as believers cross their arms to receive communion.







*As You were voluntarily raised upon the Cross for our sake, Grant mercy to those who are called by Your Name, O Christ God; Gladden all Orthodox Christians by Your power, Granting them victories over their adversaries, By bestoeing on them the Invincible trophy, Your weapon of Peace...*



## MONASTERY PRODUCTS

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- Large Diameter, Box of 100 — \$25
- Large Diameter, Tray of 20 — \$5

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# LENTEN QUOTES FROM THE FATHERS



St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (AD 346 - 397)  
This mosaic is thought to have been a direct portrait

*"But nothing causes such exceeding grief as when anyone, lying under the captivity of sin, calls to mind from where he has fallen, because he turned aside to carnal and earthly things, instead of directing his mind in the beautiful ways of the knowledge of God. So you find Adam concealing himself, when he knew that God was present and wishing to be hidden when called by God with that voice which wounded the soul of him yourself? Why are you concealed? Why do you avoid Him Whom you once longed to see? A guilty conscience is so burdensome that it punishes itself without a judge, and wishes for covering, and yet is bare before God."*

+ St. Ambrose Milan, Concerning Repentance, Book II

*"We abide in God insofar as we do not sin."*

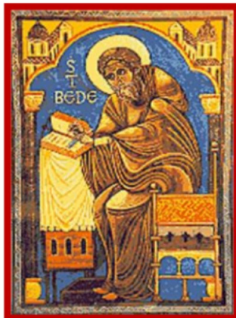
— St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on I John, 3:6



Pope St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome (AD 440 - 461) Also known as Pope St. Leo the I

*"Virtue is nothing without the trial of temptation, for there is no conflict without an enemy, no victory without strife."*

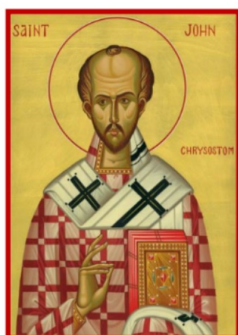
+ St. Leo the Great



Bede the Venerable, Monk (AD 673 - 735)

*Do not be ashamed to enter again into the Church. Be ashamed when you sin. Do not be ashamed when you repent. Pay attention to what the devil did to you. These are two things: sin and repentance. Sin is a wound; repentance is a medicine. Just as there are for the body wounds and medicines, so for the soul are sins and repentance. However, sin has the shame and repentance possesses the courage.*

+ St. John Chrysostom, Homily 8,



St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (AD 349 - 407)



## Expressions of the Cross from Around The World: Spotlight Ireland



*Muiredach at Monasterboice*

*This national monument is the wonderful Muiredach's High Cross. It is regarded as the most beautiful Celtic cross in the World and Ireland's greatest contribution to European sculpture. It stands 18 feet tall and is so named because an inscription on it's base reads 'a prayer for Muiredach by whom this cross was made' however little or nothing else is known of him. The cross is richly carved with scenes from the new testament and the figures on the shaft are noticeably larger than those on the top. If you look carefully at the top of the cross you will also see the design of an early 9th or 10th century wooden Christian church. This cross is located beside one of the tallest round towers in Ireland and also the tallest high cross in Ireland*



*The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise*

*The Cross of the Scriptures is arguably the most photographed of all the Irish high crosses, partly because it stands on Ireland's most important monastic site in co. Offaly where the Kings of Connaught and of Tara were buried. It is highly decorated with biblical scenes, including the Last Judgement and the Crucifixion, but the identity of many of the carved characters is difficult to establish due to the weathering of the stone.*



# Parish Spotlight: St. Edmund the Martyr in Nottingham, England, UK

This issue's parish spotlight features St. Edmund the Martyr Orthodox Parish in Nottingham, England. Headed by Father Thomas Cook, St. Edmund's is a sign that the Orthodox Western Rite is alive and well in the United Kingdom.

Many who attended the 2015 ROCOR Western Rite Conference will remember Fr. Thomas serving the Solemn Mass on the morning of the second day of the conference.



Fr. Thomas Cook serving the Ember Wednesday Solemn Mass at the 2015 ROCOR Western Rite Conference (Dcn. Aristibule shown at right)

Founded on October 12, 2012, St. Edmund's is a missionary parish under the Omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion. They are based out of Nottingham, England but have recently gained the use of St. Mary the Virgin parish in Isleworth, Middlesex for their upcoming Passion Sunday observances. Services are well-attended and growing. After meeting at a cemetery chapel just outside Oxford every month for over 2 years, the UK mission has now found an alternative venue in West London. Our first liturgy there was in October.

We thank the rector, Fr. Tom Gillum, and the parishioners of Saint Mary the Virgin church for their hospitality in allowing us to use the side altar after their main Sunday service. More photos of the church interior can be found here: <http://www.achurchnearyou.com/st-mary-isleworth/>

Moving the location of our monthly liturgy has made it easier for most people to attend, and we have been able to welcome a number of new faces.



Fr. Thomas Cook, Rector of St. Edmund the Martyr Orthodox Parish

## From their Website:

Our services follow the traditional Julian Calendar, use Gregorian chant, and are conducted in English - with a little Latin. We have one priest, Father Thomas Cook, based in Nottingham, who serves the Divine Office and Liturgy in various locations around the country. Please check the calendar to find out where services will be held on any particular Sunday or Feast.

If you are interested in knowing more about Western Rite Orthodoxy or, even better, joining us in our worship, please contact Father Thomas by phone: +44 (0)115 9384742 or by email:

[fr.thomascook@gmail.com](mailto:fr.thomascook@gmail.com). We are a small, welcoming community of people, drawn from various backgrounds, and are always very happy when someone new shows up at one of our services!  
God bless!

[www.westernriteorthodoxuk.org.uk/](http://www.westernriteorthodoxuk.org.uk/)



# FIDDLING WHILE ROME BURNS

By Dom James Deschene



Dom James Deschene

Everyone knows the story (probably legendary) of the emperor Nero playing the fiddle while watching Rome burn -- in fires set putatively by Christians, but almost certainly by his own henchmen, to discredit the Christians. Fiddling and Rome are my topics here, but not quite that kind of fiddling and not quite Caesar's Rome.

The fiddling I refer to is that of tinkering with and altering traditional texts; and the Rome I am thinking of is the Roman Catholic Church -- though my thoughts would as easily apply to any contemporary denomination engaged in an often wholesale revision of their traditional liturgies and their texts.

As with Nero's fiddling and the destruction of ancient Rome, so this modern tendency to fiddle and fuss with the texts of prayers and liturgies is linked with the undermining and destruction of our ancient faith. As Orthodox Christians, committed to the original faith of Christianity, we need to be aware of and concerned with such fiddling. Indeed, it is not unknown for such fiddling -- or at least a hankering for such fiddling -- to be found among some Orthodox Christians and their clergy.

Now it may be argued that the faith rests upon more sure and firm foundations than mere words. But does it? In one sense, of course, faith is not a matter of mere words, in so far as it is a commitment to and relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But our faith -- and that commitment -- is guarded and supported by words; it is incarnated in words. Thus we have enshrined our belief in creeds and prayers and statements -- all of them made of words. The western church fell away from Orthodoxy on the basis of a word -- the *filioque*. The ancient Arians departed the church and faith on the basis of a single vowel that changed our Lord's actual divinity into a metaphorical one. Words *matter*. In fact that is the point: words are in a sense the matter of faith (the sheer material stuff) in the sense that water is the matter of Baptism, or chrism the matter of Chrismation, or bread and wine the matter of the Eucharist. Change the matter -- baptize in milk or celebrate the Eucharist with pretzels and beer -- and you change the sacrament and lose its essence. Change the words of faith and you may lose the faith's essence.

These thoughts were prompted by a comment made to me by a couple who were telling me how they found themselves alienated by one priest's tinkering with the words of the Lord's Prayer. It was a minor tinkering and did not essentially change the meaning of the prayer. In fact it was an entirely unnecessary change and was done for no other reason than the whim of the priest and his unwarranted presumption that he could improve on the traditional wording. His assumption that he had the right to make such a change, as well as the alienated feeling created in the listeners by his changes, is my concern here. He, of course, breezily dismissed their concern as irrelevant and perhaps oversensitive. I think, however, that they were right and he was wrong.

There is an apocryphal story of some pretentious visitors to the Louvre in Paris -- the type whom a friend of mine calls the *nouveau gauche* -- wandering about, making vocal (and uninformed) critiques of the paintings. Finally, one museum guard, impatient with their carping, remarked bluntly to one of the women: "The paintings are not on trial, madame. You are." *Touché!* So I would say to the priest fiddling with the text of the Lord's Prayer, "The prayer is not on trial, Father. You are!" Or perhaps more to the point: "The prayer is not up for revision -- *you* are." It is not for us to adapt the prayer to our own preferred level of comfort or understanding or linguistic usage, but for us to be summoned by it to attain new levels of being. It is a call for us to change not the prayer, but ourselves. It is a call to *metanoia*, to repentance, to radical personal and spiritual reformation. It most often entails a sacrifice of one's ego -- not easy for anyone, but especially difficult for a certain type of clergyman.

In one of his poems (the title escapes me) Rainer Maria Rilke sets out the scene of a visitor in a museum looking at a classical statue. The poem is largely a vivid description of the statue's appearance. But the poem ends with the startling and unexpected line that sums up the effect of the work of art on the spectator: "*You must change your life!*" (*continued next page*)



...continued from other side

Such revisionism is rampant in academic circles, particularly in literature departments. Under the rubric of inclusive language, it has even infected the holy scriptures: try finding an unadulterated, non-inclusive English version of the Bible. And even these adulterated texts become subject to the further oratorical whimsy of preachers in the pulpit, rewording texts to fit their purpose of the moment.

It is the essence of ritual and ritual language that it not be mutable or whimsical, but solid, strong and abiding. Each time we come to it we are being measured against a divine and eternal standard of what we have been created and called to be. So long as we fail to measure up to that calling and that standard, we will be discomfited and challenged by the liturgy or the scriptures. It will feel like an ill-fitting suit, tight and uncomfortable and cramped, perhaps, because we have grown fat and out of shape. But wisdom tells us that rather than alter the suit, we really should be losing some weight. Sin has made us unfit creatures, morally and spiritually misshapen, needing ourselves to be reformed and revised and made well and whole.

*That would be the greatest revolution of all -- to change not*

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## Feast Day of St. Brigid Celebrated at St. Brendan's



After the Sunday service on February 14, the children at St. Brendan's Orthodox Mission celebrated St. Brigid's feast day. They gathered for a reading of *The Legend of Saint Brigid: Abbess of Kildare* by Jane G. Meyer and afterwards colored icon-like coloring sheets of St. Brigid and learned to make St. Brigid crosses with pipe cleaners (which is much easier than working with the local palm leaves!). Using stories, pictures, activities, and engaging different senses and skills can help hold children's attention and retain what they learn. Resources for learning about St. Brigid for your church school can be found at <https://www.pinterest.com/childreninoc/st-brigid/>.

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## Fr. Joseph Mai's Parish Reaching Across Cultural Divides

Father Joseph Mai is the rector of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in San Diego, California. His parish is not only growing but thriving! San Diego's diverse population is a melting pot of many cultures, races and ethnicities. In this climate, Holy Resurrection has quickly established itself as a vibrant part of that landscape. This June, Fr. Joseph celebrates his second year as an Orthodox Priest. Let us all reach out and celebrate with him!



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## Sister's Soap

Sister Christonymphi of Ascension Monastery in Resaca, Georgia has made quite a stir by making some of the finest handmade, all natural, 100% chemical-free soaps that money can buy. Outstanding quality and a large variety of hand-picked scents make it a favorite of visitors to the monastery. You can order your own by calling (706) 277-9442.





# VISITATION OF THE KURSK ROOT ICON



Fr. Robert Bower of St. Nectarios Orthodox Church in South Bend, Indiana

On March 24th, the miraculous Kursk "Root" Icon of the Mother of God visited St. Nectarios Orthodox Parish in South Bend, Indiana. The icon harkens from the 13th century and has been known to have had many miracles wrought in its presence.

The tour of the icon throughout Chicago and the Mid-West Diocese followed its tour down the eastern seaboard of the United States where it was also received at the Monastery of the Glorious Ascension in Resaca, Georgia. Fr. Mark Rowe and Fr. Benedict Simpson served a Moleben and Divine Liturgy in its presence for the faithful.



Kursk Root Icon with Fr. Mark Rowe



During the Moleben Service at Ascension Monastery



Moleben Service at St. George Orthodox Church with Fr. Robert Bower in attendance



## The Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God

### Icon

The icon itself depicts the Theotokos "of the Sign" with the Christ child before her. Her arms are outstretched. Above her is the "Lord of Hosts," and on either side and below are nine prophets who wrote about the birth of Christ (clockwise, starting in the top right): King Solomon, Prophets Daniel, Jeremiah, Elijah, Habakkuk, Judge Gideon, Prophets Isaiah, Moses, and King David. The wooden icon is covered with an intricately worked cover of blue and gold.

### First Miracle

On September 8, 1259, a hunter noticed the icon lying on a root face downwards to the ground. The hunter lifted it and saw that the image of the icon was similar to the Novgorod "Znamenie" Icon of the Mother of God. Just as the hunter lifted up the holy icon from the earth, a strong spring of pure water surged up at that place where the icon rested.

### Other Miracles

This icon, and the help granted by the Mother of God, is linked with important events in Russian history: with the war of liberation of the Russian nation during the Polish-Lithuanian incursion in 1612, and the 1812 Fatherland war.

Several copies of the icon were made, which have also been associated with miracles.





# PRAYER CORNER



## Of your charity, please remember the following...

*St. Tikhon's Orthodox Parish* in Richmond, Virginia and *St. Columba's Orthodox Parish* (\*Coming into the Church in June of this year)

*Catechumen Michael Vance* and his family from St Brendans, Panama City, Fl. Michael has had quadruple bypass surgery recently and some other health issues. It has been a very difficult time for him and his family. His email is [padraig75@gmail.com](mailto:padraig75@gmail.com)

Continued growth in grace and numbers for the ROCOR WR Communities

Our Metropolitan, our Dean , and all ROCOR WR Communities clergy, monastics and faithful

Our WR monastics and monastic houses- that they may continue to uphold our mission with their holy prayers, and that the Lord would add to their numbers

Parishes and clergy making application and in the catechumenate for reception into the ROCOR WR Communities

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Don't forget to send us your pictures, prayer requests, stories, news and goings on now for inclusion in the next issue of the Wonderworker, please send all correspondence to [wonderworker.info@gmail.com](mailto:wonderworker.info@gmail.com)



## New Seminarians Bound for Jordanville!

We are pleased to announce these seminarians who are currently studying at Holy Trinity Seminary (Jordanville).

*Reader Kevin Kirwan & Subdeacon Michael Choinere* of Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Ralston, Nebraska

*Father Dan Ritty & Subdeacon Joseph Weigen* of Christminster of Niagara Falls, New York

Please remember these seminarians in your prayers.



Holy Trinity Seminary (Jordanville)





*With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and Ruling Bishop of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities,*

## 2016 ROCOR ANNUAL WESTERN RITE CONFERENCE



*"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,  
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.. (Hebrews 4:14)"*

**October 10 - October 13, 2016**

**Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center ~Wappingers Falls NY**

158 Delavergne Avenue, Wappingers Falls, N. Y. 12590-0858

~Further information will be forthcoming.



Any questions, contact Fr Mark Rowe at  
[fr.markrowe@gmail.com](mailto:fr.markrowe@gmail.com) or (941)914-2890