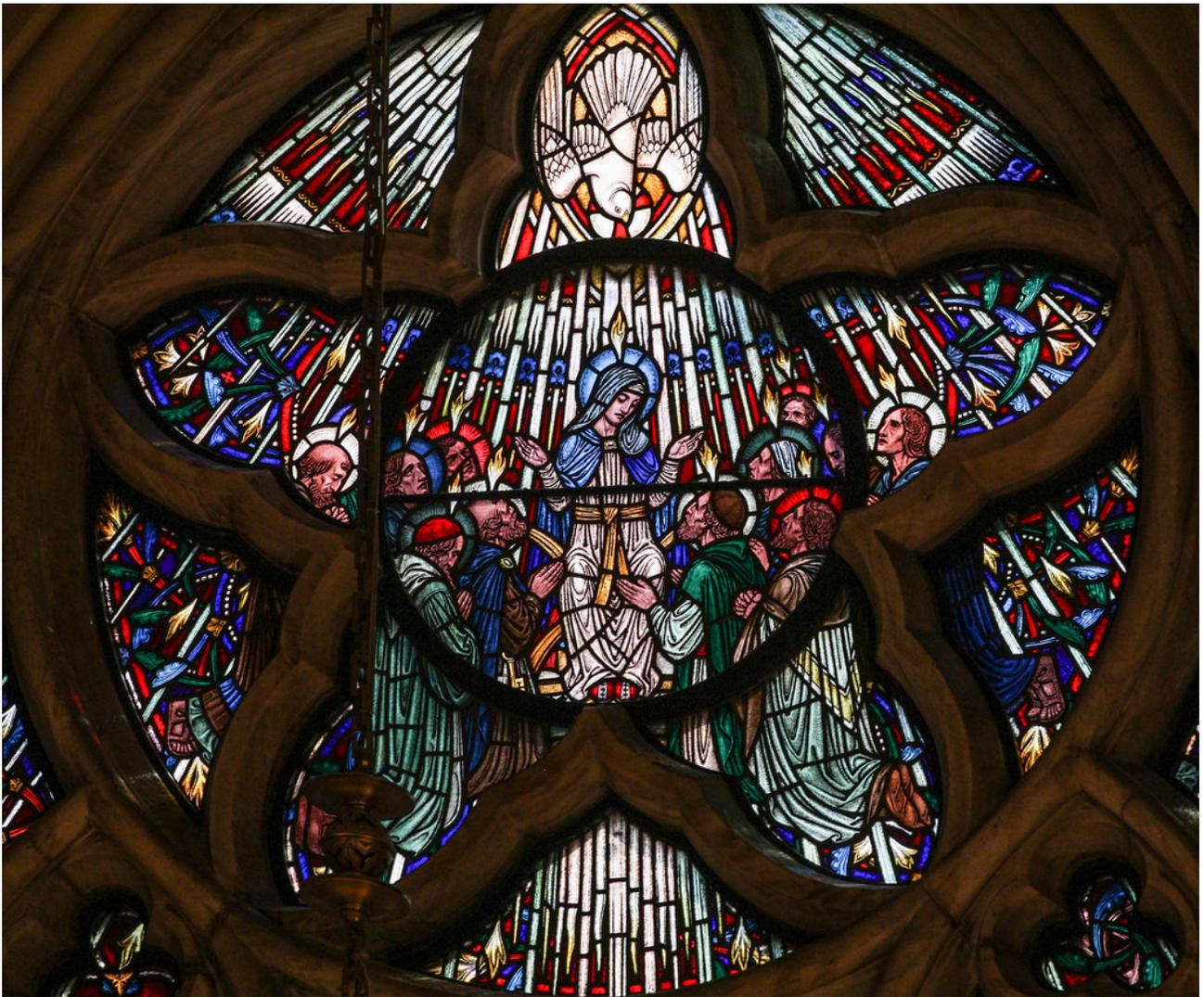


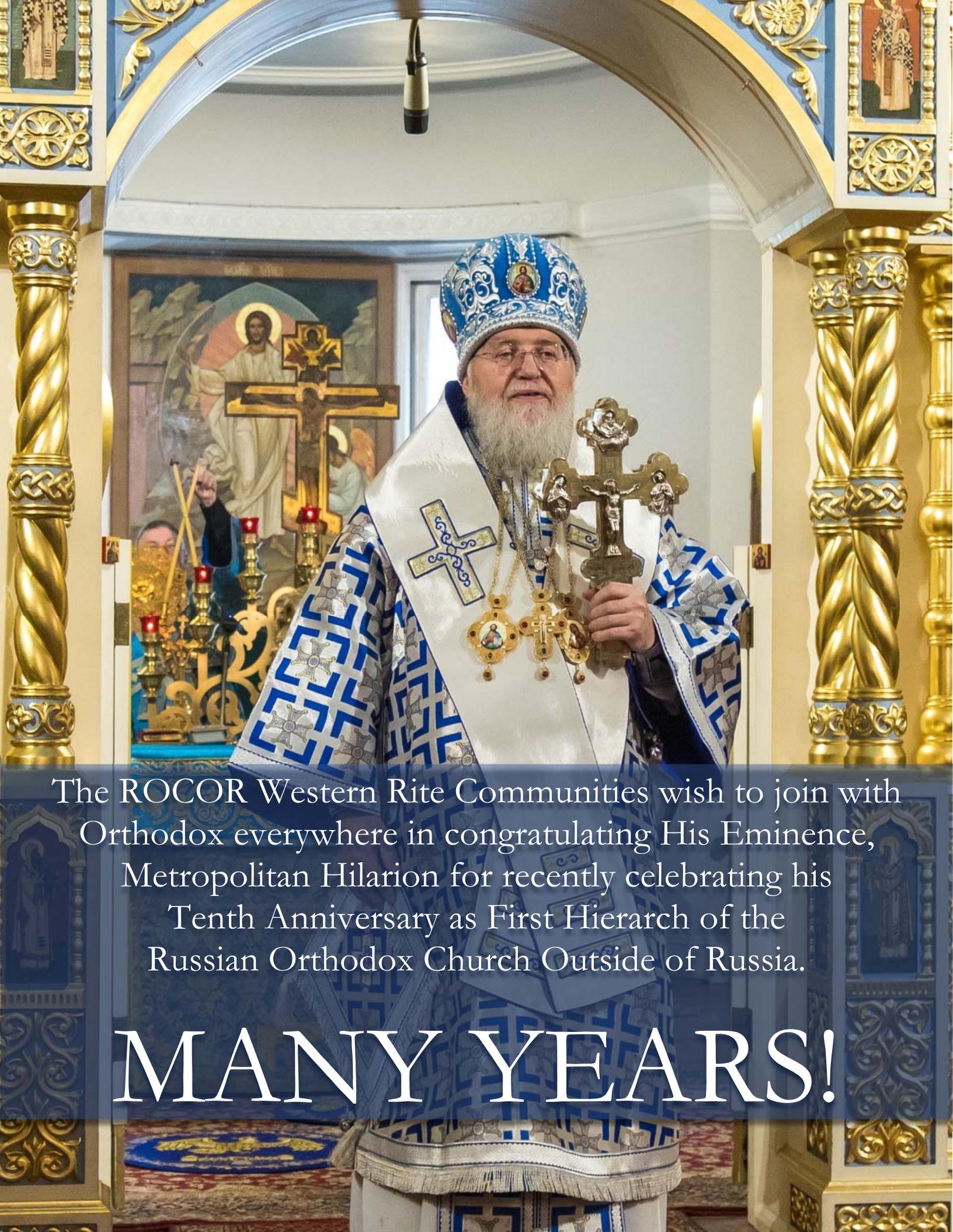
THE WONDERWORKER

The Official Newsletter of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities

Pentecost 2018



“Come, thou Holy Spirit, come! And from thy celestial home shed a ray of light divine”



The ROCOR Western Rite Communities wish to join with Orthodox everywhere in congratulating His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion for recently celebrating his Tenth Anniversary as First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

MANY YEARS!

MOSCOW: May 18, 2018

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia congratulates His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York

On Sunday, May 18, 2008, His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York was enthroned as First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. To mark this anniversary, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia sent him a congratulatory letter:

To His Eminence
Metropolitan HILARION
of Eastern America and New York,
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Your Eminence, Beloved in the Lord Vladyka!



I send my heartfelt congratulations on this important date—the tenth anniversary of your ascending the cathedra of First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

By Divine mercy and the unanimous decision of your brother archpastors, you were fated to continue the service of Metropolitan Laurus of Eastern America and New York of blessed memory. Having received the blessing of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod for the labors you faced, you became the first metropolitan of the Church Abroad in history called to this lofty and responsible task following the reestablished unity within the Local Russian Church. Since then and to this day, you earnestly fulfill the obedience laid upon you to the benefit of the clergy and flock entrusted to you.

Under your guidance, the witness of the truth of Christ is manifested in many countries of the Russian diaspora. You pay special attention to carefully preserving the traditions of the Orthodox Church in foreign lands, the opening of new parishes, spiritual education and missionary work.

I express my hope that with your active participation, the Russian Church Abroad will continue strive to resolve many issues which were discussed in preparation for the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion. I am convinced that we are called upon to exert all our efforts to ensure that our preaching of the Gospel in the lands of the "distant abroad" will be active and fruitful.

Sharing the joy on the tenth anniversary of the enthronement of Your Eminence, I prayerfully wish you spiritual and physical strength, the abundant assistance of God and further success in your ahpastoral ministry to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.



With love in the Lord,

+KIRILL

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Senior ROCOR Cleric Congratulates Metropolitan Hilarion on 10th Anniversary of Primacy

HOWELL, NJ - On Sunday, April 29, the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful of the Russian Church Abroad celebrated the 10th anniversary of the installation of Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America & New York as their First Hierarch. While the official celebrations took place in New York City, many could not be in attendance, among these the senior-most cleric of the Church Abroad, Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov.

Upon completion of Divine Liturgy in St. Alexander Nevsky Diocesan Cathedral in Howell, NJ, Fr. Valery (the cathedral's pastor emeritus) spoke to the gathered faithful about the life and archpastoral service of the Metropolitan, who since 2014 has also served as rector of the cathedral. A video of Fr. Valery's remarks in the original Russian is available where this article originally appears at eadiocese.org under NEWS.

Christ is Risen!

Today is a special moment, which marks ten years of Metropolitan Hilarion's primacy over the Church Abroad. We do not bring this up simply because it is proper to do so, but because the Metropolitan is someone that the Lord God has given us in His mercy. Vladyka Hilarion belongs to a set of people with very exceptional gifts: he feels no resentment, makes no demands, and boasts of nothing. His kindness does not allow him to utter an unpleasant word to anyone.

There was a large conference in Jordanville, many people came, and there was no room left. We arrived late from New York. I asked Vladyka where I could spend the night, and he replied, "Do not worry; you can stay the night in my cell." We came up to his cell, which had a small cot in it; I spent the night on that cot. Even other bishops did not have that luxury. The next morning, I found out that Vladyka Hilarion had spent the night in the print-shop, on the floor. What a First Hierarch! What a leader!



Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov

And thus, today, honoring Vladyka Hilarion on the decennial of his primacy, we must all understand the kind of man God has sent us, and rejoice. You know, many of us do not know this: when elections of high-ranking officials take place, there can be infighting, all manner of repugnant political moves made behind the scenes, you have read or heard of this. But when the time came to elect Vladyka Hilarion, there were no opponents! And thus Vladyka became First Hierarch, peacefully. This did not change his character or his attitude even for a moment. He is simple, kind, loving, gentle. So simple is this man, that when he was appointed to New York, a group of babushkas coalesced around him, in need of various things. Vladyka would gather these things together and go through New York City, distributing them to these old women in need. Quietly, calmly, unassumingly.

I have had many dozens of official interactions with Vladyka. I do not remember a single time when he would argue with me, but would calmly counsel the best course of action. And so, with my whole heart, like many of you, I respect and love our First Hierarch. Today, all of the archpastors and guests are coming together [in Synod]; they will greet him, offer eloquent words, but the wisest one of them would say, "Brothers and sisters, we have achieved much in our lives, strove for much; sometimes we succeeded easily, other times with difficulty. But Vladyka Hilarion, out of all of us, has a marvelous quality: he is simple, he is capable of being a simple person." This we treasure, as we recall his life today. He has done so much good: quietly, unassumingly, beautifully, silently, kindheartedly, that we will never forget his.

May the Lord God grant him strength and health to continue to labor as long as possible in the Lord's Vineyard. May we, Orthodox people, look at such leaders, and try at least to some extent to copy their lives. And only then we will we obtain true simplicity, without which we cannot live.

EDITOR'S NOTE - On Friday, May 25, the leave-taking of the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, senior-most cleric of the Russian Church Abroad, Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov, reposed in the Lord. Fr. Valery's clerical service spanned 55 years. He was the last surviving Ordinand (Deacon) of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco. In the course of his service to the church, Fr. Valery designed and oversaw the construction of the magnificent St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Howell, NJ of which he served as rector for many years.

Memory eternal to the newly reposed Protopresbyter Valery!

(From the eadiocese.org website with additional commentary)



FROM THE VICAR'S DESK



Renewed Strength, Courage for the Call.

*The Very Reverend Archpriest Mark Rowe,
Vicar General, ROCOR Western Rite Communities*

Beloved in the Lord,

Pentecost 2018

As we enter into the great feast of Holy Pentecost, may we all be truly thankful for God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, and His love for us in giving the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to us to lead the Church into all truth.

Like as on the original Pentecost, may the Holy Spirit alight upon you and yours anew and give us the renewed and continued strength to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and his Holy Orthodox Church to a needy world.

Although it may seem so, the world doesn't need another Pentecost- It simply needs each of us to be strengthened and open to putting our holy gifts to use by the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the Faith once delivered to the Saints as found in our Western Rite Communities of the Holy Orthodox Church.

This same fervor and stirring of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit caused just over a dozen people hiding in an upper room to be transformed, strengthened, and throw open the doors to the balcony and preach Christ to the passersby, no longer fearing the consequences.

And by doing so, they baptized and converted 3000 the first day, and the next day, 5000...

May we continue to grow both in grace and in numbers.

Yours in Christ,
-Archpriest Mark Rowe

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RACHEL'S CORNER

The ROCOR Western Rite Communities Pro-Life Page

The Evil of Abortion: A Personal Testimony

by Vera Lord

I have a small ghost who follows me everywhere. He changes. Sometimes he's an infant, sometimes a toddler, sometimes - mostly now - he's a teenage boy.

I was thirty-four when I killed my child. If I had allowed him to live, he would have been born in August, just like his mother. There is not a moment of my life that he is not with me. Our relationship has changed. In the past, I always saw him as my accuser or my judge. Today, my murdered child is no longer my judge, but a sad regretful ghost, whose smile I have never seen.

I was twenty-one weeks pregnant. I had felt movement. There is no easy "it was just a piece of tissue" argument for me. One more week, and I would have been beyond the legal limit for abortion in the state where I lived. There are many so-called "mitigating factors" that led to my killing my baby at twenty-one weeks of life:

Until three days before the abortion, I did not know I was pregnant. I had had three negative pregnancy tests and thought my growing stomach was a tumor similar to those that had killed several in my family. The movement I felt I dismissed as gas. Having no idea of my condition, I had continued to smoke three packs of cigarettes a day and abuse alcohol and drugs - mostly methamphetamines. I was in a dysfunctional abusive marriage and my baby was not conceived in love - he was conceived in extreme violence.

I was going to leave out all three of the above, but I have told you about them for a very important reason: The abortion industry would cite any and all of the above as reason enough to kill my child, since they consider any "inconvenient" pregnancy abortable, and, although mine was not life threatening to me, it went far beyond "inconvenient." Those who practice abortion would have you believe that all three of these factors absolve me of guilt and make the murder of my child perfectly all right - rather like the extraction of an impacted wisdom tooth - painful and regrettable and stressful, but totally necessary.

Well-meaning friends have all at one time or another said things like this: "With all the nicotine, alcohol, and drugs, you would have had a seriously damaged child; abortion was the kind thing to do." "Considering who the father was, the child could've been a serial killer; better to abort." "It was the result of a near-rape in a violent, abusive marriage; better to abort." "You were forced into it by your crazy ex when you were in a weakened condition; you're not responsible anyhow." "You did the best and only thing you could do; get on with your life."

You see? I have to tell you my story, because if any case exemplifies a supposed guilt-free abortion, it is mine. I've heard every rationalization - every single one. I have lived behind the feel-good, warm and fuzzy walls of public opinion, political correctness, and conventional wisdom - and I am here to tell you it is all unmitigated [absolute nonsense].

I believe that on [a] primal gut level we all know - really know - that abortion is murder at its most horrific. Telling ourselves that it is anything else is pure denial. All the careful layers of makeup we blend over it are for naught. We know it for what it is. And that pure soul-knowledge cannot be erased or eradicated by all the feel-good rationalizations on earth.

Self-hatred may be the worse sin - I know it is certainly the worst feeling. After I killed my baby, self-hatred became my whole life. Subconsciously I thought suicide to be too easy an out (much like the notion that lethal injection is too easy a punishment for many really brutal murderers). So I did not kill my physical body as I had killed my child; instead I committed emotional and spiritual suicide.

I created a whole new personality. Since then, I have had psychiatrists tell me that what I did was not unusual - very similar to child abuse victims, who "split-off," and become another personality in order to deal with the abuse.

During the next seventeen years, there were many times when I literally did not know the person in the mirror. Self-hatred colored my every waking and sleeping moment. It was as if I had pushed an invisible self-destruct button. I divorced my husband only to enter into a disastrous marriage with a man I did not love, whom I knew to be totally dependent and incapable of honest work, and proceeded to allow myself to be used by him and his family for thirteen years. Deep inside, I was convinced I deserved all of it. My self-worth had totally disappeared. All the things I had loved to do in my old life were now off limits; I would not allow myself enjoyment. Dreamless sleep was my only respite, and it did not come often. When I did pray, it was a secret prayer: I prayed to die, to simply cease. I believed in an after-life, and I knew that hell itself could not be any worse than the life I was experiencing.

The pain would lie in wait and ambush me at unexpected times. A scene on TV, a passage in a book - always about someone's missed chance at being a mother. I would be overcome by the kind of racking sobs that are more like spasms than crying. I wanted to just lie down and go to sleep and never get up. I lived in this self-imposed hell for sixteen years.

Then, in 1997, a heart condition I'd had since childhood became suddenly worse, and I decided to move back to the East Coast to die. As always, I was last on my own priority list. My main reason for the move was so that the leech I'd married would have a better chance at getting work after I was gone.

Living again on the East Coast and in the same state where I'd had a happy youth was like sprinkling water on a nearly-dead plant. The total change in environment created the first crack in my shell of self-hatred. I slowly began to feel like me again.

In the fall of 1997 came the event that finally set me free. I was taken as a guest to the All-Saints Greek Orthodox Church. Although in my youth I had studied nearly every major religion, I had never entered an Orthodox Christian church. Suddenly, I was home. All the pieces of my life fell into place. Although I really knew no one there except my host, it was undeniably my home. I took instruction with my spiritual father for the next ten months, and on August 28, 1998, I was chrismated. At the confession before my chrismation, I finally, after nearly two decades of wandering in hell, laid down my burden. My spiritual father, an Orthodox priest who can trace his priesthood in a direct line to the Apostles, in much the same ceremony performed in the catacombs, laid his hand on my head and, in Christ's name, forgave me of the murder of my child. I was free. Regaining my self-love has led to my regaining something else that I thought was lost forever. I have entered into a loving relationship with the most wonderful man in the world, and I am truly blessed. I am indeed free.

Which brings me to the reason I am telling you my story. When I first began classes in the Orthodox religion, I read everything I could about Orthodox views on everything. All that I read said that Orthodox Christians were anti-abortion. I asked when and where does the local Orthodox Right-to-Life group meet. Huge faux pas, vaguely akin to a loud burp at a sophisticated cocktail party. I am a very fast learner; I never make the same social error twice.

I circled warily around the issue and, by bits and pieces, I learned that the charitable organizations, the food festival committees, the fund-raisers, were all politically correct. Even the occasional weekend retreat at the monastery, as I was in the habit of doing, was just fine. But, abortion? "It's no one's business and each woman's private choice"; Now, tell me again, which food festival committee are you joining? Excuse me, but it is my business. It is not your private choice to kill your baby, and, if I can persuade you not to commit the same, awful, life-ruining act that I did, it is my duty to do so.

There is a huge echoing silence from the Orthodox Church on abortion. Strange, but everyone who tells me that "it's a woman's private choice" is a mother and/or grandmother. Perhaps they fear their daughters or granddaughters may be faced with a life-disrupting pregnancy and want an escape hatch. I'm not asking you to march in parades and wave placards and sign petitions or even to put a bumper sticker on your car. I can't do any of those things. I am not a placard-waving, in-your-face activist. Here it is: The next time anyone, even a dearly-valued friend or family member tells you, "It's a woman's choice," don't say anything. Just give them a copy of this article. If reading this can make one person even just begin to reconsider their "Pro-Choice" position, I have succeeded.

I would give my own life to be able to go back in time and allow my child to live. I cannot. I pray that your showing someone - just one person - this story will cause someone to stop and reconsider before they perform the same horrible act that killed my child and nearly killed me. I need no perfect, logical arguments. You know, in your soul, that abortion is the murder of your baby. In the name of 2,000 years of Orthodox Christianity, I say now, break your silence and speak - not in parades and demonstrations, but quietly, as you are reading this now, one child of God at a time.

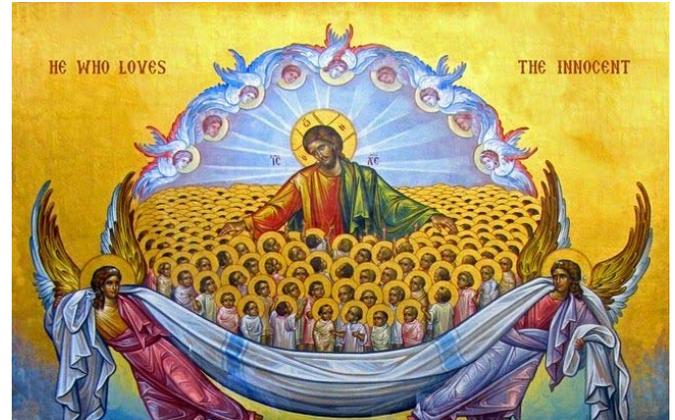
**-Vera Lord
Bethel Park, PA**

A Prayer to Jesus Christ to Deliver Us from the Sin of Abortion

Lord Jesus Christ, Who at the 6th hour of the day didst shed Thy precious blood upon the Cross for the salvation of all mankind, receive the souls of all the innocent pre- born babies, who have been, are being, or will be slaughtered today in the hospitals and abortion chambers throughout our Nation. And as their untimely deaths have prevented them from receiving the grace of Holy Baptism, I entreat Thee to accept their innocent blood as their Baptism (as Thou didst with the early Martyrs); so that they can share eternity with Thee.

To the doctors, nurses, parents and hosts of accomplices responsible for this infanticide, grant tears of repentance; so that they can run to Thee for forgiveness and healing, and thus avoid the eternal death of their souls. I believe that all things are possible with Thee, O Lord. Therefore, I entreat Thee on this day through Thy divine grace to convince at least one mother in every state to cancel her abortion and bring her child to full term; and to convince one doctor in every state to repent of his actions, and never again kill a child in the womb.

Receive my prayer, O Lord, even though it is offered to Thee from such a sinful and unworthy servant; and unite my entreaty with those of all the other brothers and sisters that are crying out today on behalf of all Thy little ones, who are now being formed in the wombs of their mothers. Deliver us and our Nation, O Lord, from this shedding of innocent blood! Forgive us! Heal us! Save us! Amen.



A Prayer for the Victims of Abortion

Most merciful, all gracious and compassionate Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, Son of God: we entreat Thee, most gracious Master: look with compassion upon Thy children who have been condemned to death by the unjust judgement of men. And as Thou hast promised to bestow the heavenly kingdom on them born of water and the Spirit, and who in blamelessness of life have been translated unto Thee; and Who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" - we humbly pray, according to Thy unfailing promise: grant the inheritance of Thy kingdom to the multitude of spotless infants who have been cruelly murdered in the abortuaries of this land; for Thou art the resurrection and the life and the repose of all Thy servants and of these innocents, O Christ our God.

Turn the hearts of those who seek to destroy Thy little ones. We beseech Thee to pour forth Thy healing grace upon them, that they may be convicted in their hearts and turn from their evil ways. Remember all of them that kill our children as on the altars of Moloch, and render not unto them according to their deeds, but according to Thy great mercy convert them: the unbelieving to true faith and piety, and the believing that they may turn from evil and do good.

O Holy Master, Almighty Father and pre-eternal God, Who alone made and directs all things; Who rises up quickly against the evil of the impious ones; who, by providence, teaches Thy people preservation of justice and the obliteration of evil on earth; Who condescends to raise up warriors for the protection of the people of God: we entreat Thee with compunction, that as Thou didst give David power to defeat Goliath, and as Thou didst condescend through Judas Maccabeus, to seize victory from the arrogant pagans who would not call on Thy Name; so too, grant protection to us, Thy servants against the enemies rising against us as we go forth to do spiritual battle against the evil one and those who do his will rather than Thine.

For Thou art a merciful God, and lovest mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen



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FOCUS ON TRAUMA

St. George Orthodox Christian Church (ROCOR- WR) is working closely with FOCUS Pittsburgh to bring healing and hope to our urban neighborhoods.

As of Thanksgiving Day 2017, FOCUS Pittsburgh deployed the nation's first-ever Trauma Response Vehicle (TRV) to address the psychological trauma associated with gun violence. Volunteers on the Trauma Response Team engage community members using the principles of psychological first aid (PFA) and mental health first aid (MHFA).

This Trauma Response Team is part of a larger Trauma Informed Community Development (TICD) initiative. Upon returning from his tour in Iraq, U.S. Army Veteran Fr. Paul Abernathy and director of FOCUS Pittsburgh says, he noticed striking similarities between his own community and that of the war zone. "When I came home, I could see my own community [the Hill District] was traumatized," he said. "You can spend one year in the Army at war, but some kids in our communities spend their whole lives," with the trauma and fear of violence every day.



Fr. Paul is also the Rector of St. Moses the Black Orthodox Church (Antiochian) which is a storefront mission in the heart of Pittsburgh's Hill District.

Trauma-Informed Community Development (TICD) grew out of research that found underlying causes of violence, homelessness, joblessness, poverty, addiction, and abuse in exposure to chronic emotional stress and trauma.

Since its inception in the Pittsburgh community, the program has worked to establish and promote healthy, healing micro-communities through community support, health and well-being initiatives, and leadership development.

"St. George Orthodox Christian Church is committed to this vitally important ministry to bring the healing message of the Church to the people of Pittsburgh," said Fr. Deacon George. "We plan to be a sister parish to St. Moses the Black and a full ministry partner with FOCUS Pittsburgh."

FOCUS Pittsburgh is part of FOCUS North America, a national movement of Orthodox Christians, united in faith and joined by a desire to provide action-oriented and sustainable solutions to poverty in communities across America—offering job training and placement, housing, and feeding programs, as well as other human services to the homeless and working poor. For more information on FOCUS Pittsburgh, please visit www.focuspgh.org.

Father Deacon George Finnell is Deacon in Charge at St. George Orthodox Christian Church located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. You can contact Father Deacon George by email at val.finnell@gmail.com.

What Hunting for Sharks Teeth Has Taught Me About The Way

By: Ramona Hovey



My husband and I moved to the beach just over a year ago. We had vacationed along the Atlantic coast for many years prior to making the move. In all these years of visits to the beach I had never found even one shark's tooth. I searched and searched to no avail. I just couldn't understand why, if there truly were sharks' teeth there, I couldn't find at least one! Even after making the coast of North Carolina my home, months went by and still no shark teeth. One day I saw where a friend had posted a picture on Facebook of the many shark teeth fossils she had found. I decided to ask her what the secret was. She took me to the beach and within a few minutes I was holding a tiny fossilized shark's tooth in my hand! My first find. For so many years I had walked right over the very things I had been looking for.

That experience stirred my spirit and began an inner conversation that flows so fervently that, often, tears fill my eyes as I pick up the fossils from the sand. With each find I am reminded of the many blessings from God that I have overlooked or not recognized as such at the time. I am also vividly aware of the many unseen and unrecognized blessings that are in my life and that just because I do not see them doesn't mean they aren't there. You see, all those years that I searched for shark teeth, they were always there. It was the seeker who needed help honing the skill to recognize them among all the broken shells and debris. I needed a teacher to show me how to recognize the genuine from the look alike, to teach me where the real sharks' teeth were likely to be found.

I realized that I didn't know how to go about finding what I was looking for. I needed a teacher. This reminded me of the lesson in Holy Scripture of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30), the eunuch couldn't understand what he read without someone to teach him. I have been on this Christian journey for nearly 50 years. The journey has taken me through several expressions of the Christian faith and with each progression I seemed to be getting closer to the true teachings of Christ, yet something was lacking. In my search for shark teeth I have found that there are many things on the beach that look like sharks' teeth and unless you know what a real one looks like you will be fooled. But once you learn what a real sharks tooth looks and feels like you will never be fooled again. And every time you touch one, no matter how tiny it is, you realize that you have touched the ancient and it does something to your soul. Thus, is Orthodoxy.



Ramona Hovey is the Parish Nurse for St. Leonard Orthodox Church in Keystone, West Virginia. She lives and searches for shark teeth in Carolina Beach, NC.

THE LITTLE SEED THAT COULD

from "Beck" - a newly-illuminated Christian at St. Andrew's Orthodox Church in Reno, NV

So, back in late September/early October, I noticed a little marigold seed embedded in the carpet at our church in front of my usual seat. I figured that it probably was stuck to my shoe at some point because I had several marigold flowers that had gone to seed in my backyard. Well, I was going to pick it up after service and throw it away but, me being... well, Me, got distracted and totally forgot to pick it up. There were many times that I would notice the seed and think about picking it up and tossing it but I always forgot after service. Our church's carpets had been vacuumed many times and steam cleaned. This seed got walked all over for months.



It was not until after service in March that I finally remembered to pick up the seed. I showed my Priest's wife and a few other ladies at church the seed and said that instead of throwing it away, I was going to plant it. The seed was bent and had a small crack in it but figured that it had been sitting in our church for so long that it deserved to be planted. So, I put the "little seed that could" into my wallet to bring home. The next day, I planted it and put the pot into our sunny window. The 3rd day after I planted it, I went to water it and there was a tiny little sprout! I could not believe the seed was still viable and I was shocked at how fast it sprouted.

Our whole church converted from Anglican to Russian Orthodox outside of Russia together. We spent months preparing for it. On April 21st, we were Chrismated into the Orthodox Church. The morning of the 21st, I noticed what looked to be the start of a tiny flower bud, however, I really doubted it because it was still so young and tiny. I took this picture of the marigold just to show the ladies at church how our little seed was doing, however, me being, well.....me, totally forgot to show them.



After a few days, it was evident that it was a little marigold flower bud! The last few weeks has been an emotional roller coaster with a lot of big drops. When we got home from church Wednesday morning, I was emotionally drained. I really just wanted to lay down but decided that I should probably water my house plants. I pulled back the curtain to my window where I keep the little marigold. It had been three days since I had watered it and to my surprise; I was welcomed by this "star" of red and orange. It made me so happy and excited to see! I decided to go back onto my phone and look at the pictures that I had taken of this "little seed that could". It was a special reminder to me that no matter how busted up and rough things can get, don't give up and plant that seed and watch it grow and blossom. This little seed has brought so much joy to me the last few months. So, I wanted to share the story about how a little seed could be so special to me. Now that our little seed has bloomed, we have thought of a very special place for our little flower.



Today was the day that I have been looking forward to. The day that I would bring our little Marigold "home" to where I found it as a seed. We got up and ready for church. I got the little Marigold from the window and brought it along. I placed it on the floor during service. I had to take a picture because it was

almost surreal seeing this beautiful flower in the same place that it had sat for months as a seed. After church was over, I gave the Marigold to our church's Matushka ("mama" in Russian), which is our Priest's wife, for a Mother's Day gift. All of the ladies that saw it as a tiny little seed on the day that I finally picked it up were so excited to see what it had grown into. Today has been a hard day for me because it is the first Mother's Day since my mom died, however, being able to share the story of this beautiful and healthy marigold plant that started out as a little seed that had been walked over, forgotten about, and wounded, has helped remind me that even the hardest times can turn into something beautiful.



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PARISH LIFE

News from St. Andrew Orthodox Church

Reno, Nevada



St. Andrew's has converted from the ACNA (Anglican). Our last Sunday as Anglicans was April 1st, Western Easter. So far we have brought with us 19 hearty souls with a few still in the wings. However, we have had a joyful experience in our first few weeks of Orthodoxy. As most converts probably understand, conversion has it's challenges. But as we like to say, one cannot grow in faith without being challenged.

We are excited that having just had Chrismations on the 21st & 22nd of April, and to have our first potential catechumen coming along. We have struggled for the last 9 years as Anglicans but are filled with hope that God will bless our mission as we learn to be Orthodox Christians and all that that means. We have also been blessed with a budding relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church in Reno, and their gracious Archpriest James. We have believed that coming to the Orthodox Church is what God has willed us to do and invite your prayers as we all begin the next phase of our journey in Christ into Orthodoxy.



Want to know more about the Western Rite Communities of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia?

Look us up at:

www.rocor-wr.org

News from the North

Faith of our Fathers: A New Dawn for Nordic Orthodoxy

It is still debated how and when Christianity reached the shores of Scandinavia; if it was, as some say, from the early Celtic Church of the British Isles, or, as others claim, through trading contacts along the big rivers east of the Baltic sea and all the way down to the Great City of Constantinople (or 'Miklagård' as was the Viking name of the city), and probably it was a fertile mixture of many influences, but what we nowadays know, according to the latest archaeological findings, is that we have had a significant Christian (and thereby also Orthodox) presence in Scandinavia since at least the middle or end of the 6th century. How the Scandinavian Church of those days was organized, is even harder to know, and it is outside the scope of this article, but it is an interesting thought that at least the southern and southeastern parts of Scandinavia can show a major influence of Christianity long before many areas of Eastern Europe and modern Russia.



An indisputable fact, is that it was due to the Scandinavian Varangian princes of Viking descent, ruling Pskov, Kyiv, Novgorod and other early city-states in the East, that the ancient empire of Kyiv-Rus was won for Christianity. We have a host of early saints and martyrs from these lands, that is modern-day Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, all of them with more or less Scandinavian heritage and ancestry, and it could suffice to here mention the Scandinavian-Kyivan saints Helga/Olga, Valdemar/Vladimir, Jarosleif/Yaroslav and many others with them in the Royal line of the Viking Chieftain Rurik, as well as the protomartyrs of Kyiv-Rus, the Swedish Varangians Feodor and John.

Back home, in the Old Rus' (as these parts of Scandinavia were called in the primitive, slavonic languages), there surely were no shortage of saints and martyrs either, both of ethnic Scandinavians that gave their life for Christ and their new faith, but also of numerous missionaries from the British Isles and from modernday Germany and the Netherlands, among them the saints Sigfrid, David, Botvid, Halvard, Eskil and Staffan, just to name a few. These our forefathers are all a part of our Nordic Orthodox heritage, that has for so long been forgotten, but it is now one of our main tasks to start giving these our own saints the recognition they really deserve, fully aware that, as St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco so rightly foresaw, nothing will happen with our work until we start to venerate and pray to our own saints.

Now is the time to firmly convey that most parts of Scandinavia were both truly Orthodox and truly Catholic for, at least, more than six hundred years, before we can talk of a more structured dominance of the Roman Catholic variety of Christianity in these our lands and countries, and also that Scandinavia was Orthodox territory for many hundreds of years before the so called Great Schism of the 10th century.

Ours is the history, the traditions and the saints of these first centuries of Orthodox Christianity, and our greatest mission must first be to restore, to continue and to develop and, by God's grace, enjoy the blessings of all this, now in full communion with the rest of Canonical Orthodoxy. Our firm stance, has always been and ever will be, that to be, and again with the words of St. John Maximovich of blessed memory, fully Orthodox, we do not need to become Eastern, but can keep our ancient Western Heritage, and we do not need to be ethnic Russian or Greek, nor Serbian, Romanian, Antiochian or Alexandrian Orthodox, but that we can proudly be Nordic Orthodox of Western Rite.



To this very purpose and answering a multitude of prayers from all our Nordic Orthodox saints, God has in his infinite mercy, and in these sorrowful days of satanic secularism and demonic deviations from true Christianity for our part of the world, raised up a guiding beacon for us and he has led us in under the comforting and healing omophorion of our modern-day St. John Maximovich as defender and protector of our true Orthodox Apostolic Western heritage, our beloved Vladyka Hilarion, to whom the saints and martyrs of the forests and lakes of Scandinavia now with one voice sings: "Many Years! Many Merciful Years!"

It has been a long journey home to Canonical Orthodoxy for most of us that now make up the Scandinavian Deanery of ROCOR Western Rite. Many, including myself, has been serving the Lutheran Church of Sweden for as long as we can remember. Looking for a new Christian home, when the latent heresies of Lutheranism are becoming more manifest every day, we were for some years drawn into Old Catholicism, just to realize that this once venerable movement, from the beginning, reaching out to restore the Orthodox faith, also has been incurably infected with the modernist disease, and then for some of us, the Orthodox by name but schismatic and un-canonical so-called Kyiv Patriarchate, mainly due to historic reasons, became the last station on this long journey back to Canonical Orthodoxy.

The final leg of this journey was quite different, since it comprised an intercontinental flight to the US, to the Sunshine State, and to something new and unexpected. Of course, there had been many conversations over phone (mainly during the night, local time in Sweden, when the Vicar General normally was full of energy...) and via mail and social media, so everything had been prepared for our entry into ROCOR Western Rite, but it was still with shaky legs and a lot of thoughts, that we, four strangely speaking strangers from far away lands (of the Swedish Chef...), walked off the plane in Tampa and out in the wonderful springtime of Florida. What met us during the hectic days in the middle of April when Metropolitan Hilarion, every day with a smile on his face, ordained us for ministry in Scandinavia, was not only the rays of the sun, but even more the welcoming warmth of our wonderful new brothers and sisters of St. Joseph Orthodox Parish of Sarasota, a true memory for us of classic Southern hospitality and true Christian brotherhood. All the gatherings, discussions, lunches and dinners with the other fellow clergy that came from all over the US to be with us these days, convinced us even more, that we were no longer strangers but part of a big loving family, dedicated to the same common cause and mission as we ourselves were.

It will take us a long time to understand what really happened during the marvelous days with our new Orthodox Christian family, but I think that I speak for everyone present in Florida in April 2018, that it surely felt like being part of history in making. Our dearest gratitude for this ever to happen, goes to our (protecting and serving and never sleeping) Vicar General Fr. Mark Rowe, that I am proud to call my friend and advisor, and our excuses to his lovely, supporting wife and kids for occupying Fr. Mark for so many days.

Likewise, our deepest feelings of thankfulness go to our beloved Vladyka Hilarion, for believing in us, for his enduring support of our Western Rite heritage, and for his unhesitating and cordial welcoming of us Scandinavian Vikings into his herd of sheep that the Lord has entrusted in his care. May God our Heavenly Father bless His and our Hierarch with a big harvest and may our risen Lord hear your prayers and ours for more laborers before the end is here! Please keep praying for us in Scandinavia, as we keep praying for you all until we (hopefully very soon) can meet again and rejoice in the works of the Lord!

On behalf of all your brothers and sisters in Scandinavia,

-Fr. Serafim

Vicar of Holy Protection Parish, Stockholm, Sweden

Dean of Scandinavian Deanery of ROCOR Western Rite



St. Patrick of Ireland Orthodox Church

Stanwood, Washington

“Blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the Lord: we have wished you good luck, ye that are of the house of the Lord”. (Psalm 118:26)



If the Luck of the Irish has come to the pacific Northwest, it has come through and only through the grace of God Almighty via the tenacious intercession of our great patron saint, the Apostle of the Irish himself.

After a full nine-month gestation, and with the continuing blessing of Our Lord, our nascent mission will soon take on the visual aspect of a growing parish. On Pentecost, we shall be celebrating our first baptism, an adult baptism of Brent, a

gentleman who is so convinced that he needs to go through with this, that he has even persuaded his octogenarian parents to do so also. Brent's parents are now officially catechumens as well and shall be baptized in the near future.



We wish to thank all of you who have prayed for us and for the success of the Western Rite in this part of the country and we ask that you please pray in particular for Brent as he comes to know the Lord in the summer of his life and for his parents who are discovering Christ in the winter of theirs, following their diamond wedding anniversary. God bless you all! Sancte Patrici, ora pronobis!

-Father Matthieu

Baptism of Brendan



Glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! We celebrated the Feast of Pentecost (Whitsunday) with the baptism of our brother, Brent Standerfer, in Lake Goodwin early in the morning (Saint John 3:5). Father Matthieu performed the prayers of exorcism and preparation, and blessed the waters in God's name. After Brent (who took Saint Brendan the Navigator as his patron saint) was baptized, we returned to the PUD building in Stanwood, where he received the Sacrament of Chrismation by

being anointed with holy oil (Revelation 7:3). At Mass, Brent received his first Holy Communion (Eucharist) from our new paten and chalice (Saint John 6:53). God is working mightily in our young parish. Thank you for your prayers for us!



A Bit of History

Maewyn Succat was abducted at the age of 16 by Irish looters who attacked his parents' house and kept him in captivity for six years. When fleeing, he returned to Britain and years later, was sent back to Ireland, this time as a missionary. When he was ordained as a priest, he assumed the name "Patrick" (from the Latin, Patricii or Patricius, which in turn derives from pater, "father") as a father figure for his parishioners.

PRE-LENTEN RETREAT AT HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH IN NEBRASKA

with Metropolitan Jonah

Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen) led a Pre-Lenten Retreat on Saturday and Sunday, February 10th and 11th, at Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Omaha, Nebraska. The theme of the Retreat was, The Pillars of Orthodox Spirituality.

Solemn Matins began on Saturday morning at 9:15 AM, followed by a Solemn High Mass at 10:00 AM, with Metropolitan Jonah at the throne and serving as homilist. After the Liturgy a silent luncheon was served in the parish hall during which The Confessions of St. Augustine were read. The Sisters of Holy Cross, the sisterhood of Holy Cross parish, organized the luncheon and provided the food. The Conferences began immediately after the luncheon and continued until Vespers at 5:00 PM. After Vespers, a reception in the parish hall was held in honour of Metropolitan Jonah's visit.



His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen)

The church was filled for Holy Mass on Saturday morning, and almost everyone remained throughout the entire day. There were participants from other area Orthodox churches as well as non-Orthodox visitors.



Orthodox clergy and laity travelled in from Arkansas, Missouri and Indiana to attend the Retreat, including Fr. Samuel Seamans (St. Thomas, Mountain Home) and Fr. Deacon Michael Hoernschemeyer (St. Genevieve of Parish, St. Louis). A traditionalist Roman Catholic bishop flew in for the event and spent five days in Omaha learning about and experiencing Western Rite Orthodoxy. Local Orthodox clergy participated in Vespers on Saturday evening and remained for the reception.

Solemn Matins on Sunday morning began at 9:15 AM, followed by a Solemn High Mass at 10:00 AM, with Metropolitan Jonah at the throne and once again serving as homilist. After the Liturgy a catered luncheon was served in the parish hall in honour of the Metropolitan's visit. Metropolitan Jonah was the luncheon speaker, and he spoke on the unprecedented spiritual revival and Christian renaissance that is taking place in Russia today.

Despite terrible winter weather, the Pre-Lenten Retreat was very well attended on both days, and was a tremendous blessing for all who attended. The Retreat was an opportunity for participants to encounter Christ and grow spiritually, and to enjoy warm fellowship with people from near and far. Three local Evangelical Christians who were visiting Holy Cross parish for the first time were later received into the catechumenate as a result of the Retreat.



BUILDING A MISSION ONE PIECE AT A TIME

by Father Adam Trent



In 2011 when my family and I relocated from western North Carolina near where I was raised in southern West Virginia after having left some twenty-four years earlier, we were pretty sure it was going to be tough. We knew what we were coming for and had an idea of what we could expect. Planting a church mission in one of the poorest regions in the country with one of the sparsest populations in the eastern United States was not going to be an easy undertaking and would certainly

present us with many challenges. We knew we were going to have to stay in prayer ourselves, ask for a lot of prayer from others, stay faithful to the mission, and draw from every ounce of creativity we could muster with God's help for the sake of mission and His Church. Knowing any of this doesn't make the actual work of the missionary any easier, it only prepares the mind and heart for what you are about to enter.

Before coming to West Virginia and then later to Holy Orthodoxy I worked full-time with a church mission affiliated with what was once the fastest growing Anglican mission movement in North America.



Prayer Ropes made by Carolyn Lawson

There is a thought found in some corners of contemporary church planting in protestant circles that states if nothing, or very little has grown after three years it is time to pack up and try somewhere else. I heard this three year and out mantra in different places in different ways, and it always struck me as tragic.



Carolyn Lawson working on vigil lamps

I find it so very disrespectful to the resources God brings together to initiate a mission, the donors themselves, not to mention the people that were once part of your focus for mission. What about them? How after three years are they not worth your continued time, energy, and resources when the mission was supposed to be about pointing them to God to begin with? Are they no longer in need of knowing God because they missed some funding deadline to join the mission and become tithers before you would decide your church planting prowess was needed in a wealthier, hipper, and more responsive neighborhood? Somehow, I don't think this is the kind of thing Christ was referring to when He told the disciples upon sending them out two by two to shake the dust from their feet when leaving a place that would not hear them. But I digress.

Church planting is difficult. It is dirty. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not something we can do alone and requires a complete submission to God's desire to see people reconciled to Him, and the authority He has placed over you in your bishop. Planting a new mission requires us to reach in places within ourselves for things we





Making Icon Stand Covers

never knew was there. To be sure we have been blessed here at St. Leonard. God has seen to it to bless us with a mortgage-free property to worship at and serve from. We are still very small in congregation, and very spread out. We count among our numbers five households over two West Virginia counties, and two other states.

While we maintain weekly services, our distant folks will gather once a month as much as it is possible

for them. I will make the trek weekly an hour and a half away in the next county to visit the home of a family with a member waiting on a lung transplant. To support our folks with continued discipleship, and prayer we have been trying to live stream Matins, Vespers, Sunday services, and we do a Thursday Skype group for catechism. The “if you build it, they will come” thing is not a reality. However, we are committed for the long haul. No three and out option here. We see ourselves as missionaries and as such we are committed to providing a genuine Orthodox Christian witness to a population struggling with poverty, addiction, and broken families at per capita numbers far higher than most other regions in the US.

We have been blessed to witness God doing amazing things through the most amazing people I have ever been privileged to know. Financially we are a very poor mission. When it came time to figure out what to do about the placement of icons it was our people who stepped up. With our limited resources it was impossible to go online and purchase what was out there. My son, my father and I decided to do something that had never been in our skill set. We started building icon stands, and our first prototypes are serving their purpose well. Praise be to God! The women of our little mission have really come through in huge ways. My daughter and aunt got to work designing and sewing covers for the icon stands. My mother got busy with framing print icons. And a long-time family friend in North Carolina put her craft skills to work making prayer ropes, and vigil lamps.



It has been all hands-on deck as we set out to live into our new reality as Orthodox Christians. The growth and faithfulness I have been blessed to witness in the lives of the people entrusted to my care as their priest and pastor has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. The people God has drawn to this little mission have been extraordinary in their willingness to share their time, talent and treasure so freely. This ethos as it is being established early in our history will ensure with God’s grace this mission will be here long after my chapter with it has been written. To God be the glory!

The congregation at St. Leonard Orthodox Church would like to share their time and talent where it will help other missions and churches acquire some of things we all need for public worship, and private devotion. All the items found in pictures with this article are available for order. Icon stands will be shipped for a contribution of \$125 and will arrive in a flat box with a package of screws to be inserted in pre-drilled holes for assembly. Prayer ropes for contributions of \$14 (33 knot), \$18 (50 knot) and key rings for \$5. Vigil lamps are \$30 at the length chain you require. Icon stand covers will also be available for order soon! Inquiries can be made to Father Adam at fradam@mcdowellorthodox.org or by phone at (681)239-2010. All funds raised will support the mission development of St. Leonard Orthodox Church.



ST. THOMAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Mountain Home, AR



Orthodox life here at Saint Thomas Orthodox Church in Mountain Home Arkansas has been quite busy since the last edition of the “Wonderworker”. It is marvelous and mysterious to know that as a result of our most benevolent leadership found in His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, Archpriest Father Mark Rowe and Father Sam Seamans that the little church in Mountain Home Arkansas represents the fullness of the body of Christ, lacking nothing, and where the members of the body are moving together towards a fullness of the image of God. Glory be to God.



We have journeyed through our second Pascha and the blessings for us have been miraculous. On March 26, Fr. Dcn. James was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and Yianni Smyrni was tonsured and ordained to the Holy Diaconate as Fr. Dcn. Gregory. On April 16, Fr. Dcn. Seraphim was ordained to the Holy Priesthood. May they serve God in righteousness forever. Axios! On April 1, Avery McCoy (Grace), daughter of Chip and Julie Norris and Patricia Murphy (Zenaida) were Chrismated into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. On May 20th, David Merritt and daughter Balla, Scott Thrasher, and Randall Davis are scheduled to be Chrismated. May God keep and protect His servants.



We continue to focus on Orthodox education, with Mary Marston teaching the youth, and Fr. Dcn Gregory doing adult education every Sunday morning. Fr. Gregory also teaches a Wednesday evening class called “Orthodoxy Unplugged” where we explore the Patristic writers through a Sacramental lens. We are currently developing an 8 Week Catechetical Program for our catechumens which will launch in June.

We affirm that we are not Orthodox because of the Liturgical Rite we use, but rather the Liturgical Rite we use is an expression of our Orthodoxy.

Spring Youth Retreat

On Saturday, May 12, the St. Thomas Youth Group went on their Spring outing to the Bass Pro “Wonders Of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium” in Springfield, Missouri. This is one the largest indoor Museums/Aquariums in the world dedicated to the grandeur of God’s creation, highlighting the responsibility for humanity to act as stewards of God’s creation.

We had a total of ten Youth participants with an additional seven adults and Fr. Dcn. Gregory as attending clergy. There seemed to as much interest in Fr. Gregory’s Black cassock as there was in the Manta Rays in the aquarium’s petting area. While at the museum, we talked about God’s creation and pointed to the passage of John 1:3, that we





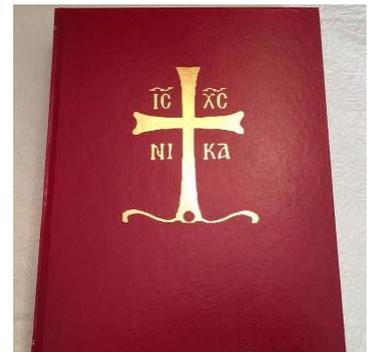
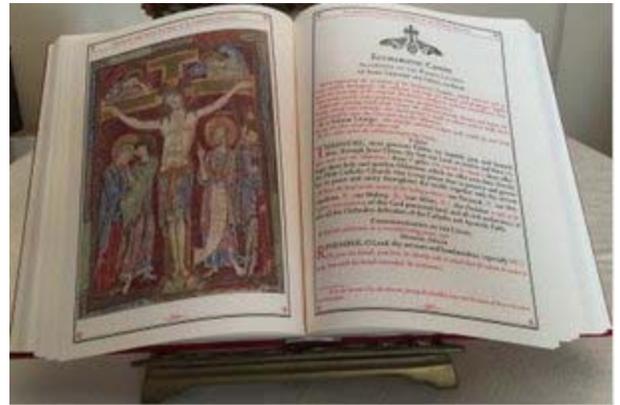
read at the close each liturgy, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” and how each time we approach the chalice we are also approaching the Creator of All, the eternal Word.

We also talked about how we are to act as stewards of earth and what it means when we pray in the litany, “That our God will give to our use the abundance of the fruits of the earth, let us pray to the Lord.” That we are responsible for our planet and that we were given the responsibility of caring for creation, not destroying it.

Overall it was a great day of prayer, adventure, and interaction with our wonderful youth group. A special thanks is to be given to Lance and Rhonda Lincoln for facilitating such a great adventure.

The Orthodox Missal according to the Use of the Western Rite of the Holy Orthodox Church (Altar edition)

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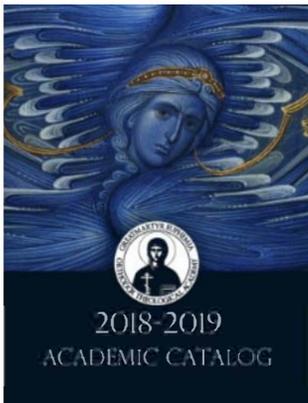


The Academy Team, left to right: Fr. Thaddeus Hardenbrook, Archimandrite Damaskinos Alazrai, Fr. John A. Peck.

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*Fr. Mark Rowe
is on the Academic Advisory Committee and supports
the program of the GreatMartyr Euphemia Academy.*

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AXIOS! AXIOS! AXIOS!

Ordinations in the Western Rite



(L to R)
Deacon George (Val) Finnell - St George Orthodox Church, Pittsburgh PA, His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, The Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Father Michael Hoernschemeyer, St Genevieve Orthodox Church, St Louis Missouri. Father Michael and Father Deacon George were ordained at St Joseph Orthodox Church in Sarasota Florida.

Deacon David Prestridge was ordained by His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion on the Feast of St Mary of Egypt at the patronal feast of St Mary of Egypt, Roswell, GA. Fr David is the administrator of the newly-forming mission of St Bartholomew in Chattanooga, TN.



(L to R)
Deacon Gregory (Yianni) Smyrni, St
Thomas Orthodox
Church, Mountain Home, AR, His
Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, The
Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Father
James Casper, St Thomas Orthodox
Church, Mountain Home, AR,

Ordained at St Joseph Orthodox
Church, Sarasota Florida





(L to R)

Fr John (Ron) Longero, St Andrew
Orthodox Church, Reno, NV , His
Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, The
Very Rev. Archpriest Mark Rowe,
Deacon Michael Catenacci,
(Sweden)

Ordained at Saint Joseph Orthodox
Church, Sarasota, Fl



(L to R)

Deacon Michael Catenacci, Deacon Andreas Eraybar, His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, The Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Hieromonk Serafim (Furemalm) Hieromonk Lazarus (Wilhelmsson)
<foreground>

"Team Sweden"

The above clergy were ordained to create and serve our new Scandinavian Deanery. Hieromonk Serafim was appointed to assist the Vicar General in the administration of the Scandinavian Deanery. There are currently two parishes in Sweden, with more to follow. Holy Protection of the Mother of God Orthodox Church - Stockholm, Sweden
SS Halvard and Nikolaus Orthodox Church- Gothenburg, Sweden

<http://www.nordiskortodox.org/>

Ordained at Saint Joseph Orthodox Church, Sarasota, Fl

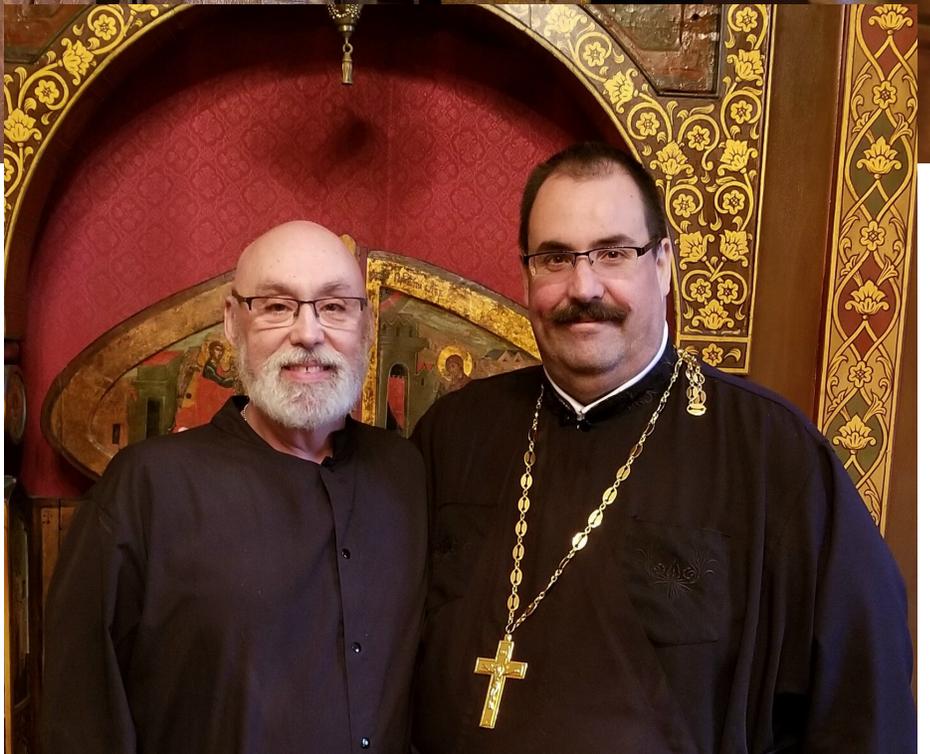
Team Sweden offers Fr Seraphim an ordination gift.





Fr Seraphim Byrd was ordained Priest by His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion at St Joseph Orthodox Church, Sarasota FL. He serves at St Thomas Orthodox Church, Mountain Home, AR.

Subdeacon Daniel Brown was ordained to the Diaconate by His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion at the Synodal Church of St Sergius of Radonezh. Father Daniel will continue to serve at Christ the King, Tullytown, PA.



Paschal Photo Album

from St John the Wonderworker Des Moines, IA

Right: Maundy Thursday

Below: Exsultet



Right: Sopranos and Altos



UPDATES FROM ENGLAND



The Sermon: Second Sunday after Easter

The Western Rite community in England continues to gather once a month at an Anglican church in West London. The main church is dedicated to Saint Mary the Virgin but there is also a side chapel, dedicated to Saint Joseph the Betrothed, in which we celebrate Holy Mass. We have seen a slow but steady growth, with a wide age range, two new enquirers, and the congregation usually numbered in the low teens.



After the Liturgy: Second Sunday after Easter

On Pascha eve, Father Thomas and Subdeacon Silouan travelled to the ROCOR parish of Saint Elisabeth the New Martyr in Wallasey, near Liverpool, where we celebrated a most joyful Feast with Father Paul Elliott, Matushka Elisabeth and the faithful of the parish. Father Thomas will next be celebrating the Divine Liturgy in Wallasey on the Feast of Pentecost, during Father Paul's absence.

In other news, Father Thomas and Subdeacon Silouan will be joining a group of Orthodox Christians at the annual March for Life in London on Saturday May 5th. The aim of this march is to protest peacefully against abortion. Later this year, we are planning to visit and say prayers at the grave of Julian Joseph Overbeck, one of the pioneers of Western Rite Orthodoxy. We plan to do this as close as possible to the anniversary of his burial on November 7th, and might consider making it an annual event thereafter.



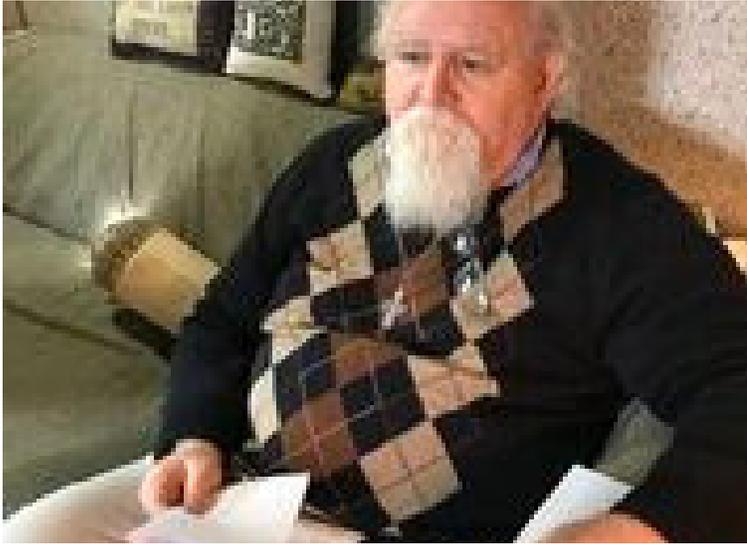
The Great Entrance: Saint Elisabeth the New Martyr



The Paschal Gospel: Saint Elisabeth the New Martyr

Many Years to the Newly-Illumined

Recent Chrismations



Joseph Gilbody was chrismated into Orthodoxy at St. Cuthbert's on Palm Sunday, April 1. Joe is a retired nurse and a native Rhode Islander.



Rachel (Balla), David the Tree Dweller (David), Theophan the Recluse (Scott) were chrismated and are the godchildren of Fr. Gregory



Pascha Sunday, April 8th with a church full to capacity, we had 1 Adult Baptism, 1 teen Baptism, and 5 Chrismations at Christ the King in Tullytown, PA.

Celebrating Pascha

St. Athanasius Orthodox Church



New fire at St. Athanasius

"Lumen Christi"



Eggs and antidoron..

Sermon on the Feast of Pentecost

By
Saint John Chrystostom



Let us spiritually extol the grace of the Holy Spirit in spiritual hymns, since spiritual grace has on this day shown upon us from heaven. Though our words are too weak to express adequately the greatness of this grace, we shall praise its power and activity to the extent of our abilities; for the Holy Spirit probes all things, even the depths of divinity.

We are celebrating the day of Pentecost, the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, the day of the hope of perfection, the end of expectation, the longing for salvation, the fulfillment of prayer and the image of patience. Today the Spirit Who acted to scatter the nations in the time of Heber has formed tongues of fire among the Apostles. His action of old led to the confusion of the nations, in order to restrain the will of man from its brazenness and consequent chastisement; on this occasion, however, amidst fiery tongues, the deeds wrought by the activity of the Holy Spirit served to preserve us as recipients of preaching, in fulfillment of the will of God.

In the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the water, and later, in the time of Christ, the same Holy Spirit of God rested upon him. Then He moved, and now He rested, as being one in essence, equal in honor, ever-existent and unoriginate together with the Father and the Son.

He Who by the flight of a dove over the waters of the Flood heralded fair weather to Noah, the same Holy Spirit, by the sight of a dove at the waters of the Jordan, showed the world the Sonship of Him Who was baptized. Moreover, the Lord had a terrifying answer for those who dared to utter blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “Whoever speaks blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

David, declaring his desire for this Holy Spirit, prayed to God, saying: “Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

As is well known, where He is absent, every sort of corruption sets in. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit entered into him, wherefore David said, “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

This same Holy Spirit sanctified the prophets, instructed the apostles and empowered the martyrs. This same Holy Spirit consecrated Isaiah, taught Ezekiel and revealed the resurrection of the dead. As he says, “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord.”

This same Holy Spirit chose Jeremiah from his mother’s womb, and raised up Daniel to deliver Susanna. As it is written, “God raised up by the Holy Spirit a young youth, whose name was Daniel.”

David so loved the presence of this same Holy Spirit that he prayed to God, saving, “Thy Holy Spirit shall lead me in the land of uprightness.”

This same Holy Spirit of God came to dwell in the holy Virgin Mary, embracing her with the communion of the Divine Word at the good pleasure of the Father, and making her the Theotokos. Elizabeth, being filled with this same Holy Spirit, understood that the Lord had come to her by means of the Virgin; wherefore she said, "And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Zachariah, the father of John, was filled with the same Holy Spirit, whereby he declared that the son born to him would be the prophet and forerunner of the King Who was to come. John himself was also filled with the same Holy Spirit; the eyes of his intellect were given light, and he beheld the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit hovering over Him Who was being baptized, Him Who baptized with the Spirit and fire. By the action of the same Holy Spirit, the Lord Himself, when He was giving His Apostles His teaching in detail and strengthening their minds for the time of His Passion, said to them: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

Moreover, revealing to them the Spirit's consubstantial power, He said: "When the Holy Spirit is come, which proceedeth from the Father, He will guide you into all truth."

The holy Apostles waited expectantly for the coming of the power of this same Holy Spirit; they waited together to be clothed with power from on high, according to the commandment of the Lord, Who had said: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high; for, behold, I shall send the promise of My Father upon you."

And, as it is written, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, all the holy Apostles were assembled with one accord in one place, and the Paraclete was sent to them under the appearance of tongues of fire." Having received the abundant promise of the Father and the Holy Spirit, they were strengthened, and they manifested Him Who was sent to them, His grace and His power. The martyr and protodeacon Stephen, filled with the same Holy Spirit, Whom he received by the laying-on of hands of the Apostles, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Being full of the Holy Spirit, he saw the doors of heaven opened and the Only-begotten Son and Word of God standing in the flesh at the right hand of the power of God. Filled with this same Holy Spirit, Paul became the preacher of divine mysteries. As Ananias said to him: "The Lord, even the Savior, hath sent me to thee, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

And Paul afterwards said with assurance: "And I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

The same Holy Spirit came to Cornelius and those that were to be baptized with him, and each of them spoke in his own tongue and magnified God. This same Holy Spirit came upon the Ethiopian eunuch after he went down into the water [of baptism], and he was filled with joy, and he went on his way rejoicing. This is the same Holy Spirit Who preached by the prophets, Who gave understanding to the apostles, Who spoke to men. He was given to them by the Lord, and all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist Him. For, as the Lord said, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father Which speaketh in you."

This Holy Spirit also ordains priests, consecrates churches, purifies altars, perfects sacrifices and cleanses people of their sins. This Holy Spirit abides with the godly, refines the righteous and guides kings. This same Holy Spirit preserved the soul of Simeon, lengthening the time of his life and reversing the rules of death, until the day when he beheld Him Who is the Redeemer of life and death; for it had been promised unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

It was the same Holy Spirit Who gave strength to Elijah, and Whose power Elisha desired when he asked of Elijah: "Let there be, I pray thee, a double portion of thy spirit upon me."

This Holy Spirit enlightens souls and sanctifies bodies. It was the same Holy Spirit Who descended upon the Apostles and filled them with divine wisdom. Having received His gifts, they were all filled with the knowledge of God; not only were they given divine knowledge, but also spiritual gifts.

Simon Magus, being a stranger to the Holy Spirit, fell to his perdition. As Peter said to Simon: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast desired to purchase the priceless grace of the Holy Spirit with money.” Therefore, beloved, let us strive to keep our bodies uncorrupted; for one who has acquired a new body, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit, has become a true victor over the devil. What the Spirit of God has said, may it be done unto me.

Moreover, Joseph, strengthened by this same Holy Spirit, desired not that his body be defiled by the vile deeds of this life; for he knew that the Spirit does not abide in a body that has commerce with sin; therefore, he attained a royal rank. This Spirit enlightened Bezaleel, so that he fashioned the tabernacle with all beauty and skill. Joshua the son of Nun, possessing the same Spirit, became a faithful heir to Moses and obtained the inheritance of the Promised Land for his people. As God said to Moses: “Take to thyself Joshua the son of Nun, a man who has the Spirit of God in him.”

This is the Spirit of Whom the Lord, when He breathed upon His disciples after His Resurrection from the dead on the third day, said: “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”

And again, it is the same Spirit Who has vouchsafed to give eternal life to the faithful after the general resurrection from the dead. As it is written: “Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.”

Many are the gifts of the Holy Spirit; many and all-powerful are His gifts.

As it says in a certain place: By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth. And Isaiah says: “The Spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness.” And Paul adds, “The Spirit of adoption and of grace.”

He Who is equally ever-existent, and equally unoriginate, and Who shares the throne and the honor of God, His Son and Word, called this Spirit the Spirit Who is our Comforter. David calls Him the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is sent by holiness; the governing Spirit, since He has dominion over all, because all things came from Him and are kept in existence by Him; and the good Spirit, since salvation and all kinds of goodness are from Him.

And what does Isaiah call Him? The Spirit of God, because He proceeds from God the Father; thus does God Himself speak of the Spirit of God as proceeding, in the words, Which proceedeth from the Father. Isaiah further calls Him the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, because all wisdom and good understanding have been given through Him; and the Spirit of counsel and strength, because He is able to bring to pass that which is desired; and also the Spirit of knowledge and godliness. Ezekiel, a man of the spirit, says: “And I will give you a new heart and a new Spirit.”

He is one in essence, one in principle and one in counsel with the Father and the Son. Wouldst thou believe? Listen to what the Scriptures say of Him: “When He prepared the heaven, I was present with Him.”

The prophet further says: “The Lord, and His Spirit hath sent me.” Lest anyone think, from what was said, that this new Spirit would come from any creatures living or yet to come, or from any other person, He says: “And I will put My Spirit in you;” inasmuch as He said, “A new Spirit.”

In the Acts of the holy Apostles, this was expressed in commandments: “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.’” And again, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us;” even as it had been said, “I will put My Spirit in you.”

Would you demonstrate that this was indeed His coming, as was foretold in parables, and that it was His grace acting upon the holy Apostles? Will you believe what was said? Listen to St. John the Evangelist, who says: “The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Paul called this Spirit the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of grace, inasmuch as in the waters of the baptismal font men are born again of water and the Spirit, and we receive the adoption of sons. In the same way, the Lord said to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sonship and the Spirit of grace; for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, for those who have been born by the power of God.

Moreover, the Spirit is called the Comforter, because He is also our advocate with the Father. And not only is He with the Father, but He is always with us also as a gift.

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever,” comforting your hearts and making them steadfast in divine patience and trust in Christ. Whereas the holy Apostles received this testament after Christ’s holy Rising from the dead, and were sent forth to teach and to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and whereas we have already been vouchsafed this true washing by the Holy Spirit, let us strive to keep our souls and our bodies undefiled as we glorify the Most holy and consubstantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen



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REFLECTIONS ON ORDINATION

Father Seraphim Byrd



Father Seraphim Byrd

On April 16, 2018, I enjoyed the great blessing of being elevated to the priesthood by His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion at Saint Joseph the Betrothed Orthodox Church in Sarasota, Florida. How can one express the feelings experienced in such a momentous event? One's sense of being unworthy of ordination as a priest, while simultaneously being overwhelmed by the mercy and grace of God are beyond words.

Many years I ago, I began praying that God would lead me into His fullness. St. Paul mentioned this fullness in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he wrote that he would pray for them that they, "may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). Over these past few years as an Orthodox Christian, I have enjoyed an increasing sense of God's fullness and particularly so, while serving as a deacon, and even more so, as a newly ordained priest!

The wonder of it all continues to amaze me! Just a couple of years ago, there was no Orthodox church within 100 miles of Mountain Home, Arkansas. Now, by God's grace we have Saint Thomas Orthodox Church, a thriving parish with three priests, a deacon, a subdeacon, a reader, many wonderful people, and several catechumens! Thanks be to God! And wonder of wonders, God is allowing me, unworthy though I am, to participate in His work, and as a priest! Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

The joy of serving as a priest has been greatly magnified by celebrating the Divine Liturgy. Our newly ordained Fr. Deacon Gregory suggested that I begin my service as a priest by observing 40-days of Divine Liturgy, and graciously offered to serve with me each day. Due to work schedules, etc. we have modified our 40-days of liturgy to be celebrated each week on Monday, Tuesday Wednesday at 6 AM, and on Thursday and Friday at 6 PM. On Friday, May 11, I celebrated my 15th Divine Liturgy. What a great joy and blessing to celebrate the Mass each day!

This 40-days of Liturgy is proving to be one of the most profound and life changing experiences of my life. As a former Southern Baptist pastor, let me just say the liturgical learning curve is rather steep! Oh, but is so rich as well! I am learning so much and loving every minute of it. For decades I have longed for the fullness of God, and now I am experiencing the wonder of His fullness, His very life, in a way I never imagined was possible on this side of eternity! I am so very thankful. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

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