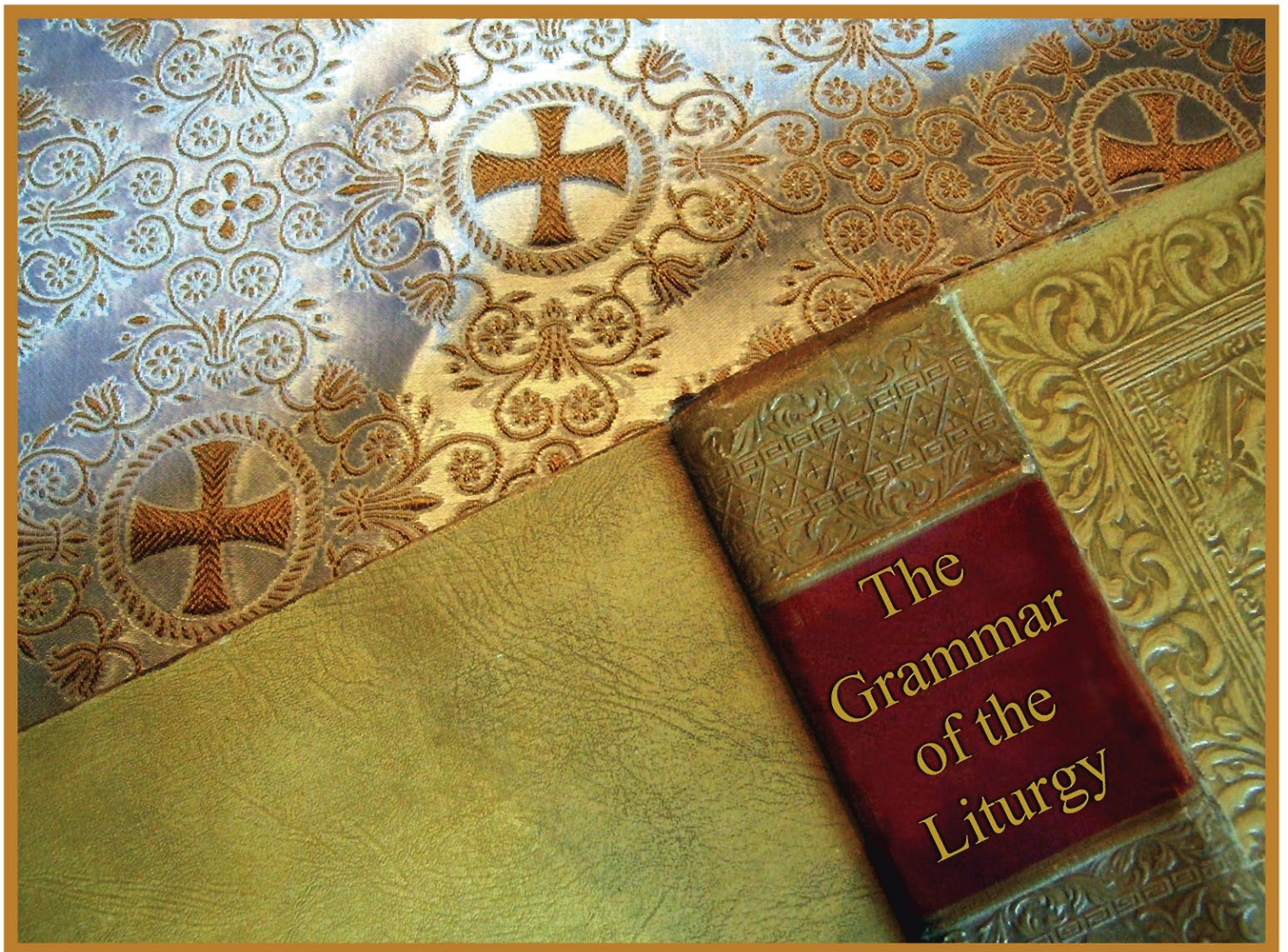


Summer /Fall 2008

# Jacob's well

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







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

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**Deadline for Winter 2009 issue: November 1, 2008**

# The Grammar of the Liturgy

## The Taste of Truth

by Fr. John Shimchick

"The reality of Christianity is this: the taste of truth, the eating and drinking of truth." (St. Macarius)

Over the past few months clergy and laity have been gathering around North America in anticipation of the OCA's All American Council (AAC) and discussing among other things the following questions: What is working well in the OCA? What are your concerns and suggestions for the future of our Church? What would you want to say to the All-American Council? When writing this I had not yet attended any of the sessions, but I have been part of many discussions among a variety of age groups and backgrounds. The consensus response has been in the words of St Macarius - an overwhelming desire for the taste of truth, to eat and drink - to experience truthfulness in vision, word, and action. Some have suggested that our Church could not handle the reality of "brutal honesty." Others have wondered - why be part of any Church or even secular organization that was founded on anything else?

Among the sources within our Orthodox Tradition that form us in knowledge and experience of the truth is the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. "Taste and see, experience for yourself, that the Lord is good," we sing at various times throughout the year as we commune with the One who reveals, speaks, and is Himself truthfulness incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17; 8:45; 14:6, and throughout the Gospel of John). The Eucharist is the Fountain, the source of immortality and truth. But the liturgy is not just about the consecration of bread and wine. The Holy Spirit, after all, is called down upon both "us and upon these Gifts here offered." It is not even about one particular Sacramental action. Rather, as the chapter headings in Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's book *The Eucharist* reveal, the liturgy encompasses a series of sacramental actions.

In this issue we will explore the potency of these actions and their relationship to truthfulness, by reviewing the power of the words that explain them. If we really would savor the taste of truth, then let's take these words seriously and reclaim their flavor. As an aid in doing this we will examine the "*Grammar of the Liturgy*," not so much in a technical or formal way, but as the means for asking - how are words used in the liturgy? What can we learn about truth from verbs, prepositions, and even punctuation?

Though we did not include articles on nouns or adjectives, one could imagine a discussion of such images as: kingdom, peace, grace, hope, body, blood, faith, communion, holy, precious, and life-creating - not

to mention Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are some obvious distinctions in liturgical ministry and function during the liturgy, but for the sake of our discussion it may be the dominance of pronouns like "we" and "us" and the relative absence of "me" and "I" that may be most significant. The liturgy, while appearing sometimes more as operatic or theatrical entertainment between performers and audience, really implies joint participation and dialogue. As Mark Bailey shows in his article on punctuation, during the Anaphora, "The entire assembly, clergy and congregation, stand united at the elevation and together audibly express praise and awe to God." For St. John Chrysostom, the liturgy and eucharist are the great equalizers as we, clergy and laity, present ourselves before God: "There are cases when a priest does not differ from a layman, notably when one approaches the Holy Mysteries."

As we move through our issue, in support of the OCA's National Administration we encourage our Diocese to remember in prayer "those who work for healing and accountability within our Orthodox Church in America." We will feature interviews with each of the new administrators, beginning with Fr. Michael Tassos, Treasurer. We are starting several new series of articles by Fr. Mark Koczak ("The Spiritual Lives of Soldiers") and Kerry Pappas (on marriage preparation) and welcome Elisabeth Graham, a young and articulate book reviewer. In examining Diocesan life, we remember the long ministries of Fr Paul Shafran and Fr. John Nehrebecki, and feature some of our newer missions, as well as the Singles Group which has been meeting in the Washington DC area. Our series, "*You Must Read This*," continues with an interview of Kyriacos C. Markrides, whose book, *The Mountain of Silence*, was recommended by Warren Farha of *Eighth Day Books* in our last issue.

As a seminary student 30 years ago, I was frequently reminded of the close interaction between *orthodoxia* and *orthopraxis*, between true belief (worship or glory) and true practice. Many of us who have been discussing those three questions mentioned earlier have been dismayed at the disconnect instead that has been taking place at almost every level of life within our Orthodox Church in America. Where do we begin? How do we repent or change our minds, our behavior at this disparity between what we claim to believe and how we act? Where will consistently pursuing the taste of truth lead us? These are the other questions I hope we will not be afraid to ask. ❖

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## Entering, Eating and Breathing the Text

by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre

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This is not the place or time for either a theory or defense of grammar, but I do want to pause and celebrate individually, the invaluable work that is accomplished in their decent and orderly way by particular parts of speech.

First, the preposition, which we love for its startling power to affirm and reframe relationships. Think, for instance, how much prepositional theology is imbedded in the words of the hymn taken from an ancient Celtic prayer, *"St. Patrick's Breastplate:"*

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet. Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Each of those prepositions - "with," "within," "behind," "before," "beside," "beneath," "above," and "in" - opens an avenue of reflection on the mysterious and manifold nature of relationship to Christ - how Christ leads, accompanies, backs us up, holds us up, protects, sustains, indwells. Or think of the rhetorical formula we cling to as Americans who still share some common vision of Constitutional democracy in "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people," each preposition its own chapter in political theory, bearing its own vision of justice. It may be that we have our regional differences about whether we stand "in" line or "on" line, and there may be some play of meaning around what's "in" and what's definitely "not on," but even at their most idiosyncratic, prepositions do good service in the ways they locate and organize and help us, as James put it, to "understand things in relation," which, he claimed, is the only way they can be rightly understood.

And let's hear a little praise for the undersung conjunctions that hold together the parts of things until we can envision the whole. Those that subordinate give us whole theories of history; "because" and "since" and "although" excusing or indicting in single swift strokes the decisions of kings or the deceptions of demagogues, explaining the fall of Rome or the czar's victo-

ry over a foolish emperor. And even the lowly coordinators, "and," "but," and "or" pry away the blinders that would let us see anything in isolation.

And the modifiers - overused, hackneyed and redundant as they often are - can sharpen our vision like lenses. Spacious and squalid, darkling and sullen, luminous and undulant, they give us tools to distinguish and compare and somehow grasp the qualities that might otherwise escape the eye or the searching heart.

And nouns - those instruments of Adam's power. All those *Peterson's Guides* that give us the names of flora and fauna, the apples and balls and cats that launched us on our alphabetical way, the visual dictionaries that assure us every screw and bolt and thingamajig has a legitimate name, reaffirm the solidity and stability and security we find in the names of persons, places or things. Deconstruction notwithstanding, we do rely on the relations between words and things. As Wendell Berry puts it in *Standing By Words*, the "relation of speaker, word, and object must be conventional; the community must know what it is."

We even affirm the goodness of young parents' freedom to name their children after trees or honeymoon resorts or rock stars because they have taken part in the work of creation and the gift of naming is a commensurate reward. Mere lists of nouns can be poetry. Think, for example, of Hopkins' exuberant inventory in *"Pied Beauty"*:

Glory be to God for dappled things -  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and  
plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

Ending, of course, with a cry of praise for the one who "fathers forth" all this abundance of particulars.

So we love nouns and the material blessings they bestow. But most of all I want before we leave this little tour of parts of speech to give thanks for verbs. We depend on them to reveal the dance of the whole dynamic universe, from orbiting electrons to sucking undertows to swiftly tilting planets. We entwine them

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in sentences like strands to describe the complex weave of events. A single verb can change, our sense of what it is we are witnessing, as when Mary Oliver writes of preying vultures, "they minister to the grassy miles." Good verbs invest our gestures with the language of the heart: "There were ten thousand, thousand fruit to touch, cherish in hand and not let fall." And sometimes nouns become verbs because they can't sit still any longer: so things catapult and flame and meetings are chaired. Verbs, I think, matter most. Asked for his name, God gave Moses a verb. And even those of us who are, as Cummings put it, "human merely being" can't be contained in nouns, even buttressed by the best adjectives, but burst and blossom into verbs like Van Gogh's trees and leaping fields when we are most alive.

We care for words when we use them thankfully, recognizing in each kind a specific gift borne in the mother tongue, bestowed at birth as a legacy from the one who was in the beginning, with God, who was God.

[This passage was taken from: Marilyn McEntyre, "Entering, Eating and Breathing the Text," in *Caring for the Word: Stewardship of Language in a Culture of Lies*, © 2009 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, all rights reserved.

The text was originally presented in October, 2004 as the *Stone Lectures* at Princeton Theological Seminary, and are available in audio CD form or as downloadable files, by calling: 609-497-7900 or email: [media@ptsem.edu](mailto:media@ptsem.edu).] ❖

## Worship in Action

*Fr. Martin Kraus*

I recently returned from a mission trip in Tijuana, Mexico. I was leading five college students who used their school break to volunteer for an Orthodox program called *Real Break* which is organized by the Orthodox Christian Fellowship campus ministry. We all flew in to San Diego airport and we drove South over the Border to our destination at St. Innocent Orphanage. The orphanage is a one of its kind in Northern Mexico that takes in boys who are not able to be cared for by family, mistreated or on the streets. We helped around the orphanage during the week with some needed maintenance, but we were also there to help build homes for families in the Colonia (village) just a few miles away. When we arrived we unpacked and were introduced to our sleeping quarters, about the size of a walk-in shed an American family would have in their backyard. We were told that these are the very houses we will build for families of Tijuana. We stayed in these homes for the week to get a glimpse of what it is like to live as many families do in the Colonia who are fortunate. Four walls,

two windows, a concrete floor and a door; it seems small and cramped but life-saving for the family. Many families do not have it so good.

It was dark when we arrived so we all went rummaging through our luggage for our flashlights since we had no electricity in our sleeping quarters. It got chilly at night so we did our best to keep warm and get a good night's sleep for a hard day's work the next morning. We felt grateful when we get to take a hot shower in the bath house, many Mexican families do not have this luxury.



*Fr. Martin, Joey Wihbey (student), Sarah Kochan (st.), Kat Applegate (Coordinator), Karen Hilberg (Intern)*  
*Front Row l to r: Angela Sultani (st.), Christina Fernandez (st.), Laura Anne Habib (st.)*

We met bright and early for our morning prayers, and at the end of a long day as the sun was setting we met again for our evening prayers. This was the foundation for our work, our worship. Our morning prayers set the tone for the day, oriented us toward our work, and gave us strength. Our evening prayers gave thanks to God for the day and prepared us for our evening. We prayed at the beginning of our work at the maintenance shed and we thanked God before we ate our

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meals. We prayed for the family in the Colonia after we completed the finishing coat of stucco on their new home. Somehow the prayers seemed in their proper context. We travelled thousands of miles away from home outside our comfort zone, placed in a state of need. We were tired, hungry, anxious, yet very eager. We met people who have barely anything yet they were joyful, hospitable, generous, and thankful to God for what they had. We received much more in return for what we gave. I believe our prayers of worship presuppose that we are in this state of need. When we are surrounded by our material things and have a false sense of security, do the prayers ring true in our hearts?

On Sunday we all gathered into the chapel for Divine Liturgy. Fr. Michael Nasser was preparing the gifts for the offering. The boys were dressed in their best clothes and some of them were preparing to sing in the choir. It was a damp and chilly morning. As I was saying my entrance prayers I could see my breath in the morning air. Just think that early in the history of our Church Christians came to call this service “the Eucharist,” a Greek verb translated as “to give thanks.” The service constitutes action, truly giving thanks is more than something we say. It's something we do. We are not passive spectators at the Divine Liturgy. Our worship is a divine activity; one that constitutes the Church. It is also an expression of the Church. When our Lord ascended into heaven after His glorious resurrection he told his disciples, “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

We are given a description of the Sunday worship in the early Church from a 2nd century document known as the *First Apology*, written by St. Justin. The celebration of the Eucharist in the early Church as it still does today began with the Liturgy of the Word with readings, homily and the prayers of the faithful. The emphasis was on gathering God's people together and listening to God's word. Then Justin describes how the Church enters into the “Eucharistic” part of the Liturgy. Our Liturgical wor-

ship is now moving from “the Word” (noun) to “Eucharist” (verb). The worship transforms ideas and concepts from God into concrete and real action, making our Lord's Supper present and operative. The most sacred part of the service, when the gifts become the very body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, have been called the “The Eucharist” ever since at least the end of the first century; yet thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) is only one element in the celebration. St. Justin describes how after the gifts had been “eucharistified” (*eucharistethonton*) they are then distributed. The word Eucharist even came to be used to describe the consecrated gifts themselves. It is clear that the early Church understood worship as an action; an action that begins within the confines of a local community but then is distributed far and wide to those in need.

There is a misconception that Holy Communion is a sacrament that is dispensed by the Church. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann in his book, *Liturgy and Tradition*, warn us that we should not treat the Eucharist merely as one of the sacraments of the church; as one of the “means of grace.” Rather, “it is the power, the grace given to the Church that makes the Eucharist possible, valid, efficient, but this power of grace 'precedes' the Eucharist and is virtually independent from it. Thus the Church is understood and described as an institution endowed with divine power to teach, to guide, to sanctify.” The Eucharist is the fruit of the work of the Church, not her source. All the work of the Church is fulfilled and finds its end in the Eucharist.

It was hard to leave the Orphanage and *Project Mexico*, it must have been how Peter, James, and John felt when having to descend Mount Tabor. I got home late Saturday evening having to get up early the next morning to prepare for Sunday Divine Liturgy. I couldn't wait to celebrate the Liturgy and partake of our Lord. The trip energized me, filled me with the joy of doing the work of the Church, of putting our faith into action, and partaking of her Fruit.

Fr. Martin is the pastor of Holy Trinity Church, East Meadow, NY. ❖



## Prepositions in the Divine Liturgy

By Mary Ann Bulko

Initially when asked to write an essay on the grammatical prepositions used in the text of the Divine Liturgy, admittedly, I was baffled. How important are such words as *at*, *by*, *in*, *to*, *from*, *of* and *with*? And further, how do they edify or enrich us either spiritually or intellectually? Then I recalled a line written by Fr. Stephen Siniari in a recent article entitled, "A Little Faith in the Darkness." It reads as follows: "*When things get complicated even in the Church, do the basics.*" I believe this seemingly small truth conveys a deep and meaningful bit of wisdom about what we read, write, hear and say in the community of faithful and the need to get back to basics.

While a preposition may be a very small word, it is also a bridge or important link that connects a substantive to a verb, adjective or another substantive such as a noun or equivalent. Lest you stop reading this English lesson prematurely, let's go directly to the text of the Divine Liturgy. Although we may hear and say the words time and again, we may not fully appreciate the spiritual richness and theological meaning of the sacramental mystery taking place to which we are witnesses and presumably active participants.

The celebrant begins the all-encompassing experience by announcing or proclaiming the blessedness, holiness, or sanctity of the Kingdom of the Triune God. We as the faithful believers must prepare as a community to participate and journey to this other realm. How do we begin? What is our mindset? Where are our hearts? We begin with the direction to pray -

**In peace.** At first glance, this might suggest simply a 'quiet atmosphere'. We leave the noisy surroundings of daily life to enter the solitude and serenity of our church buildings. This is not just a peace and quiet that's called for, although it is good to refrain from idle chatter in church. Rather this peace is *from* above. This is a peace beyond man's origination. The very source *of* this peace is the Holy Spirit.

And so the priest or deacon continues and confirms that the peace sought is *from* above. This is the source of both the peace and most certainly the salvation that we seek - it can only

come *from* above, *from* God Himself - *from* the Creator and Giver of Life.

The Liturgy proceeds with an exchange of many petitions or litanies and responses from the laity. *For* what things do we pray and ask God to impart His mercy? *For* world peace; *For* holy churches; *For* the union of man; *For* our President; *For* the Armed Forces; *For* all clergy and people; *For* just about everything!

There are more than twenty-five petitions in the Divine Liturgy that proclaim the persons or things *for* which we pray. Each and every time we commend ourselves to Christ, the glorious Theotokos is recalled as we likewise remember her together *with* all the

Saints; as they are all undoubtedly in good company *with* each other! Yet again, the celebrant reminds us continually: "*For* unto Thee are due all glory, honor, *and* worship to the Father, *and* to the Son, *and* to the Holy Spirit, now *and* ever, *and* unto ages of ages." We note here that even the single conjunction *and* is an

important bridge for it denotes not only the equality within the Triune Godhead but also the distinction of each unique Person of the Blessed Trinity while the now *and* ever, *and* unto ages *of* ages defines and reiterates the dogma of eternal God, without beginning and without end. We also as the faithful people of God commend ourselves *and* each other *and* all our life to Christ. We are in this as individuals who together make up His One Body - we are part of each other and *in* communion *with* each other as well as the Head, Jesus Christ.

We hear in the Liturgy of the Word the readings/teachings of Holy Scripture. The author of a particular Gospel or Letter though inspired by God is always acknowledged so that the readings are always preceded by the preposition *from* followed by the name of the source.

There is a dialogue or rather I would suggest there is a 'trialogue' that takes place during the Divine Liturgy. While the celebrant and laity offer an exchange of many words and phrases - "Peace be *with* you." "*And* with thy spirit." - there are also the words and actions of God Himself during the service. It is the Holy Spirit Who gives the peace and the



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Spirit Who changes the "bread and wine" - and it is Christ's own words that say, "Take eat: this is my Body which is broken *for you for* the remission of sins...Drink ye all of it: This is My Blood *of* the New Testament, which is shed *for you and for many for* the remission of sins." I believe it is in the realm of this Blessed Kingdom that this is a possibility or rather probability. Hugh Wybrew writes in *The Orthodox Liturgy* "...Chrysostom calls it a mystery when 'we see one thing and believe another'. What is seen, heard and touched in the Eucharist can be understood by the senses and known by natural reason. But the spiritual, heavenly realities concealed in it can be grasped only by faith and the enlightenment given by the Holy Spirit. The sacrament is a sign of a reality greater than itself, which is nevertheless made present and available in the sign." He later goes on to say: "It is Christ who presides, as at the Last Supper; and when the priest gives them Communion, they must understand it to be the hand of Christ himself which reaches out to them." The Eucharist is to be seen as a 'participation in the worship of heaven.'

The Creed is also replete with the conjunction *and* so we see that the Nicæan Council Fathers felt very strongly there be a continuum of all that Orthodox Christians believe. "I believe *in* One God...*and in* one Lord Jesus Christ...*and* was incarnate...*and* was crucified...*and* suffered...*and* was buried...*and* He arose...*and* ascended...*and* He shall come again...*and in* the Holy Spirit...*and in* One Holy Catholic *and* Apostolic Church...*and* the life of the world to come." It is interesting to note there was much discussion regarding Christ's role in creation and whether it's best to say '*by Whom*' or '*through Whom*' all was made.

And so through the Anaphora or offering, the bread and wine are offered to God. We give thanks, the epiklesis or descent of the Holy Spirit takes place, and the saving acts of Christ are called to remembrance. And prayers for the gifts and for our deliverance continue. The "Our Father" is said by all and the celebrant concludes with: "*For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages*" to which the people respond "Amen".

Soon follows the declaration "Holy things are *for*

the holy." The Eucharistic prayers are said by the community of faithful and the consecrated gifts are distributed.

The Litany of Thanksgiving concludes with "*For Thou art our Sanctification*"; it is indeed Christ Himself Who makes us sanctified or holy by the grace of the Holy Spirit.. And so follow the prayers on the amvon as well as those of the dismissal.

The Divine Liturgy has been dissected and studied by insiders and outsiders throughout the centuries for various reasons and purpose. Perhaps one can even say that the Divine Liturgy is in itself a type of *prepositional sacramental* act in that it bridges or connects the Kingdom of God with the worldly creation that seeks to be transformed and restored back within that Kingdom and how it was intended to be.

In *Liturgy and Tradition* +Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote: "This Kingdom which for 'this world' is yet to come and forms the ultimate horizon of its history, is already present (revealed, communicated, given, accepted...) in the Church. And it is the liturgy which accomplishes this presence and this parousia, and which in this sense (in its totality) is the sacrament of the church and thus the sacrament of the Kingdom..." Fr. Alexander continues saying that which is necessary is a "...liturgical theology

which alone today can restore to us that unique eschatological energy and perspective which makes us the people of God acquainted with the true sense of the ancient formula: "*In this world but not of this world...*" ❖

In historic Orthodoxy, there is a total absence of criteria for self-criticism. Orthodoxy defined itself: against heresies, against the West, the East, the Turks, etc. Orthodoxy became woven with complexes of self-affirmation, an exaggerated triumphalism: to acknowledge the errors is to destroy the foundations of true faith.

The tragedy of Orthodox history is always seen in the triumph of outside evil: either persecutions, or the Turkish yoke, Communism - never inside. And so long as these convictions do not change, I am convinced that no Orthodox revival is possible.

From: *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann* (September 25, 1974). ❖



## Even Punctuation Can be Theological: Music and Punctuation\*

By Mark Bailey

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Just after being asked to write this essay, I observed a man taking his young son and daughter out for midday treats at a Starbucks near San Francisco. The daughter was seven or eight years old, the son was about five. The father bought them cookies and juice. When they sat down, the father reached over to try some of the cookies, after which he said, "Wow, they're not bad, guys." The son looked-up, paused, and became perplexed by what his father had said. After a few seconds, the son responded, "They're not? We're eating good guys? Why are we eating good guys?" Even though in this instance it was clear to me what the father was getting at, the comma separating "bad" and "guys" had failed to register in his son's ears.

The father laughed and then tried to explain what he meant without going into grammatical detail, which the son at that age would have had no way of comprehending. The explanation was rough at best, and the son was just as happy to return to eating his cookies without giving the matter another thought. Even though the "bad guys" phrase that the father spoke had been grammatically correct, he unintentionally confused his son. And what the father realized by this exchange is that we do not always hear punctuation, which can lead to misunderstanding. Apply this concept to worship along with the possibility of unintentional confusion, and the issue merits more consideration than just an anecdote.

The role of punctuation in language is to help convey and clarify meaning. Sentences are perhaps our most basic modules of communication, and punctuation either separates one sentence from the next, or frequently occurs within the sentence to set apart clauses, enumerated items, and so forth. Any punctuation that ends a sentence, most commonly the period, is often self-evident in our speech and sung inflections. If periods were not audibly obvious, chaos of incomprehension would follow. Internal punctuation, however, such as commas and semi-

colons, are often more subtle in speech and singing, sometimes even imperceptible.

Interestingly, there is a stylistic practice in sung German and Germanic Latin, for example, that acknowledges internal punctuation, especially the comma, with a slight lift in the vocal sound to indicate grammar (as the tempo allows). This practice is absent in conventional sung English, however. In fact, such a practice would probably strike most ears as an affectation, unless it were articulated in an extremely nuanced and sensitive manner.

In most cases, fortunately, not singing the comma in English has no negative impact on comprehension. Consider the opening of the first antiphon (Typika style) of the Divine Liturgy, "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Ps. 102/103:1, RSV). Whether the singer or choir pauses slightly at the comma will not altar or change the audible comprehension of the words. In fact, especially at a quick, speech-like tempo, trying to articulate even a slight vocal lift at the comma would create a distracting break in the flow of sound. (Keep in mind that many settings place a longer note over "Lord," which hints at the comma, although the primary function of the

note is to stress the word.)

Certain styles of church music such as L'vov/Bakhmetev court chant (commonly known as "Obikhod") often with its long lines of speech-like choral writing - lines that can make it difficult to hear internal punctuation - may easily lead choirs to sing something they do not mean. For instance, in the Creed, consider the following phrase that refers to Christ as Son of God: "...begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made" (OCA translation). Visually, as one reads the text, the theological meaning of the phrase should be clear. Yet, for years church choirs sang through the line (and some still do) without any sort of pause or lift, so as to make the semi-colon after "not made"

*Even in those instances when a false meaning is avoided, muddled grammar and instances of inaudible punctuation can cause the worshipper to become distracted and distanced from worship.*



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imperceptible. And this dramatically changes the phrase's meaning. In other words, in spite of grammatical correctness, one hears in the voice of the choir that the Son of God was not made of one essence with the Father. To avoid this, there has to be some sort of musical gesture to distinguish the phrases or clauses as worded, lest we risk - or perhaps even cause - theological misunderstanding. And the problem continues in the very next phrase. When the choir and the people sing through the semi-colon among the words "of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made," the text sounds as if all things are made by the Father. That expression - "by whom all things are made" - actually refers back to Christ. Many directors, as well as some of the latest versions of the Creed published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, place a slight hold on Father to try to clarify the meaning. Even with the hold, however, many will presume "by whom" refers to the Father, which again distinguishes between the grammar on the page and the grammar in our ears. (Some translations place a comma there instead, following the Greek and Slavonic, which in English, one might argue, could refer to the Father rather than to Christ.)

The problem intensifies in that most musical settings of the Creed in common use - especially in the OCA - apply patterned phrases of music in an antecedent-consequent or A-B relationship. This type of musical phrasing implies a sentence that is divided into two clauses in which the second clause answers, elaborates on, or even heightens the first, as is so often found in psalmody. The opening line of the Song of Mary, as it mimics the Book of Psalms, is one of numerous examples. The A phrase, "My soul magnifies the Lord" is heightened in the B phrase with "and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Whatever music is used for the A phrase, in other words, will set up the B phrase, especially when a comma (or an implied comma or lift) separates the two. This pattern then repeats for the duration of the full text and furthermore strongly suggests the grammatical construction and punctuation of each phrase, especially the comma dividing each clause.

The textual structure of the Creed, especially in the section under discussion, is far from an A-B

structure, however. Rather, after the opening phrase of the section, "And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." the text proceeds more or less as a series of bullet points elaborating the opening phrase or Christ as Lord, each bullet point referring back to it. Whereas this may be apparent in the original Greek by virtue of language convention, it becomes completely obscured in English when we force upon it a musical system of phrasing that suggests an erroneous grammatical relationship among the clauses. (To be fair, at this time no musical setting exists - to my knowledge - that grapples with this aspect of grammar, syntax, and punctuation in the Creed.)

*Understanding,  
addressing, and even  
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both its cognitive and  
aesthetic elements.*

The troparion for the feast of the Meeting of our Lord is another example in which musical and grammatical misalignment related especially to punctuation can result in misunderstanding or even nonsense. Textually, the troparion stanza divides into two groupings of three phrases each. The first grouping: "Rejoice, O virgin full of Grace (A)! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God (A-1), enlightening those who sat in darkness (B)." The second grouping: "Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder (A); you accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls (A-1), who grants us the resurrection (B)." By way of "rejoice," the first set of three clauses addresses Mary, the second set addresses Simeon, and

both are infused with important Christological references and images. Although the musical problem has been corrected in many places, including on the OCA web site, many settings still force an A-B structure onto the text. Therefore, the listener instead hears: "Rejoice, O virgin full of Grace (A)! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God (B), enlightening those who sat in darkness (A). Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder (B)" and so on. This series of incorrect pairings causes the third phrase of the first grouping, "enlightening those who sat in darkness," to sound as if it were the beginning of a new thought or phrase. And it falsely becomes linked to Simeon in the following clause when it should refer to Christ by way of Mary. In other words, it almost sounds as if Simeon is the one who enlightened those who sat in darkness, because the music sounds a comma where it should articulate a period.



# The Grammar of the Liturgy

Church readers also face this problem from time to time. Many parishes, after the Divine Liturgy, now have the reader intone the prayers of thanksgiving (for Communion) as the faithful venerate the cross. One of those prayers reads as follows: "Make me, a sinner, worthy to stand on the right hand of Thy glory..." Again, the visual impression of the text, which is grammatically accurate, is clear. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to articulate this phrase in chanted speech-like manner without it sounding as if the reader is saying, "Make me a sinner..." At Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, the phrase was reworded as "who am a sinner." Admittedly, this creates awkward syntax, but at least it removes audible misunderstanding without having to rewrite the line entirely.

Some poetic forms, such as the opening of the vespers hymn "Gladsome Light," are problematic for the same kinds of reasons. Using a particular type of construction, this ancient hymn opens by addressing Christ metaphorically as "gladsome light." The phrase then progresses to the Father, who is "heavenly," "holy," and "blessed." Linked to illumination imagery, the phrase culminates in the exclamation "Jesus Christ," pointing back to "gladsome light." (The full text, therefore: "Gladsome light, of the holy glory, of the immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed; Jesus Christ.") The problem is that most musical settings sound as if "blessed" is a modifier for "Jesus Christ" and not the Father (the problem exists in Slavonic as well). Since the Father requires his intended modifiers without destroying the integrity of the sacred poetry, one solution has been to insert the vocative "O" before "Jesus Christ," which is a step in the right direction. In other words, "...of the immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed; O Jesus Christ." This may not solve the problem entirely, but it signifies an important attempt at honoring the meaning as seen -- but not necessarily as heard -- by the semi-colon after "blessed."

The overall point is that composers, arrangers, conductors, and singers - as well as anyone else engaged in liturgical leadership, including translators - cannot assume that a self-evident and correct grammatical construction on the page will have the same impact on the ears when chanted. Therefore, it is necessary to test the text in the voice and listen carefully before taking it into the service.

In the following example taken from the Anaphora, the translation, as well as a necessary level of adjustment in punctuation, clarifies both the liturgical structure and theology of the moment. At the point of elevation, the choir sings "We praise Thee" as a devotional hymn in response to the priest's intonation, "Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all." The hymn, in this format, is reflective, as if the community takes a moment to ponder and then respond. The Thyateira translation of the Greek, as published by Oxford University Press, in the priest's intonation uses a participle ("offering") for "we offer" and replaces the comma and period with two dashes, followed by the choir's entrance. In other words, "Offering you your own of your own - in all things and for all things -- We praise you, we bless you..." The choir line is not a reflection of the priest's intonation but its completion; in a sense, the liturgical affect is active rather than passive. By completing the priest's intonation, the congregation is drawn into the moment more fully, and furthermore is compelled to sing the moment along with the choir, rather than simply listen in a more detached, if not solemn, manner. It is another way of saying that the entire assembly, clergy and congregation, stand united at the elevation and together audibly express praise and awe to God.

***"Gladsome light,  
of the holy glory,  
of the immortal  
Father, heavenly,  
holy, blessed;  
Jesus Christ."***

Adjustments such as these have profound impact on the theological shape of, and our response to, the liturgical moment, as long as the text is not obscured and contradicted by the music. Even in those instances when a false meaning is avoided, muddled grammar and instances of inaudible punctuation can cause the worshipper to become distracted and distanced from worship. Music in liturgy does not stand alone, however, but relies on text for its shape and meaning, as do we. Understanding, addressing, and even fixing instances of incomprehension - so that punctuation can penetrate and form the music naturally - deepens worship for the gathered assembly, necessarily enhancing both its cognitive and aesthetic elements.

\* Borrowed from the last line of Fr Ephrem Lash's article, "Liturgical translation for the 'common good:' a single phrase and its demands," *Sobornost*, 25:2, p. 67. ♦

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## Diocesan Youth Retreat - Jesus, Others, and Yourself (JOY)

by Dennise Krause

The Diocesan Pre-Lenten Youth retreat was held the weekend of February 8-10. Over 40 youth from the Diocese participated. It was hosted by the Mother of God Orthodox Church and was held at the Retreat Center located at St. Joseph's Seminary in Princeton, NJ. Some of the facilities at the Retreat

Center include dormitory rooms, large meeting spaces, a gymnasium and dining hall. In addition, the Mother of God Orthodox Church is located on the former Seminary grounds, so that the youth were able to have prayer services in an Orthodox Church throughout the retreat.

Here is a description of how the first night went from one of the participants.

*We had our first meeting which was an icebreaker. An icebreaker is a fun way to get to know somebody.*

*That night we gathered up to watch Spiderman 3. Spiderman taught us that revenge is like a poison that can take over. For example Peter Parker could not decide which suit to wear - his black suit which made him feel more powerful or the red suit. In the beginning Peter wore the black suit which was driving him (Spiderman) to avenge his grandfather's death. However, he realized this was ruining his life. In the end he forgave his grandfather's murderer and once again wore his red suit.*

*Before bed, we all went to the chapel to pray.*

*-Marty Kraus, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church*

Saturday morning started out with a morning prayer in church followed by breakfast in the refectory.

The day was broken into three sessions based on the retreat topic *Jesus, Others, and Yourself (JOY)*. For each session there was a brief presentation followed by a discussion group. Each discussion group consisted of 8-10 youth led by a group leader. The discussion groups were broken down by age. Some of the group leaders were parents, but there were several group leaders who were college students who they themselves had attended these retreats in the past.

The first session was about *Jesus*. Discussion centered around having a relationship with Jesus - should you have a relationship with Jesus, how do you start a relationship with Jesus and how do you build a relationship with Jesus.

*The first session was given by Miss Sara Lyman about her experiences at college with her roommates. We could relate to her and have a hands-on experience. She had good advice that could be used in our lives.*

*-Lizzy Cassar, Mother of God Orthodox Church, grade 9*

The second and third sessions were about *Others* and *Yourself*. The discussion was led by Greg Abdalah who is a Seminarian from St Vladimir's Seminary. Discussion was about relationships - what is a relationship and how do you have a relationship with Others, and about cultivating a relationship with Jesus Christ and others and out of that relationship how we understand our true identity.

*Knowing somebody other than yourself is important. These other people that you meet can shape your life in many various ways. There are 2 clubs at our school in particular that show how this can be used. In the Interact club, people work with others to benefit the community and the school. In the Life club (which I'm part of) I play board games with others and have fun doing so. While playing we discover things about other people we did not know. Although it was my first time I had a blast! I was even able to make a few friends for the first time in my life! Overall, the retreat was an eye opener for me. But I have one point to make. I will definitely go again next year!! Keeping in con-*





*tact is crucial to stabilize any friendship.*

*-Steven Palivoda, St George Serbian Orthodox Church*

*Through the year I find myself being concerned with things other than my religion, this retreat always brings me back. The talks, if nothing else, strengthened my belief that even if I stray from God, I can always come back and He will accept me. It's wonderful to meet people in the same religion; I rarely get the support these people give me in school and for that, I value the friends I make.*

*-Alyssa Sharrock, Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, grade 10*

One teen expressed she learned to forgive. She had been having trouble talking to, much less forgiving her cousin for something the cousin had done to her. But after the retreat she found she could forgive her cousin, "I felt that if Jesus could forgive, so could I".

Each year, one of the highlights of the retreat are the skits the participants do. The youth, broken into

groups, create and perform their own skits. The skits are a great team-building activity.

*"I thought that the skits were great but I thought that there could be more of them. The ones that were done were funny. My favorite things about the retreat were hanging out with my friends and eating a lot of snacks."*

*-Aidan Jarmus, St Sergius Chapel, grade 7*

On Saturday night everyone piled into cars and went bowling. It is rumored that after Fr Martin failed to knock down any pins the bumpers were then put up - he contends that after the bumpers were installed, he got 2 strikes in a row, followed by 2 spares...

On Sunday, the youth and their parents attended Divine Liturgy at Mother of God Church and then had a farewell brunch. There were some last minute exchanging of phone numbers and emails and lots of picture taking. Many of the youth keep in contact year round on Facebook or other social networking websites. Details are available at [www.orthodoxfellowship.org](http://www.orthodoxfellowship.org). ♦

## A New Parish Center Emerging at Holy Resurrection Church

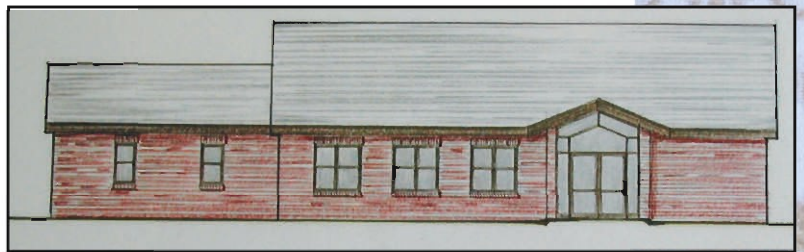
Construction has begun on the new parish center at Holy Resurrection Church in Wayne, NJ.

The building will house a multi-purpose area that will be used primarily for youth activities, both educational and social. Since many of our parishioners travel a distance to get to our church, this additional multi-purpose area will make it possible for one major activity for youth to take place in the new center while a second activity for parents and other adults is conducted in the existing church hall. It is anticipated that community outreach activities will also take place in the multi-purpose area throughout the year in an effort to draw the citizens of Wayne and surrounding communities to a greater awareness of Orthodox Christianity and our parish community as a living witness to the Faith.

The facility will also include adequate space for our parish lending library as well as a comfortable space for on-site study and reading. This space will also be used for our year-round inquirer's program as well as other small group activities on weekdays. Finally, the center will include space for an office for our pastor as well as an office for our parish administrative assistant.

The building was designed to be the primary location for most weekday activity while our main church building will continue to be used for worship as well as our weekend educational and social activities.

It is anticipated that the new parish center will be completed by the end of November 2008. ♦



## Ministering to Orthodox Singles in the DC Area

by *Diana Haverlack*

The seed for the Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles' group was planted in January of 2003. During our monthly meeting of the St. Mark Chapter of F.O.C.A. (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America), Father Gregory Safchuk, Spiritual Advisor, suggested that St. Mark begin a single's ministry. Diana Haverlack then immediately requested to expand this singles effort to include other Orthodox Churches. With Father Gregory's positive response, June 7, 2003, was chosen as the date for the first, Orthodox Fellowship Singles Event in the Baltimore-Washington area. This "Chili Party" was a rousing success with more than 150 Singles in attendance, from almost all Orthodox Jurisdictions in the area.

The desire to schedule another event was soon heard "loud and clear." Therefore our next event, a "Polynesian Party", was scheduled for September.



Early in the organizing process it became clear that it would be best for the group to establish an independent, pan-Orthodox character, not officially affiliated with St. Mark's Church or the F.O.C.A. For clarification, the purpose of the "Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles" (according to the Articles of Incorporation) is to "minister to single, Orthodox Christians, enabling them to fully experience the Orthodox Faith; support, encourage and promote unity among all Orthodox Jurisdictions; establish ways for all single, Orthodox Christians to form enduring friendships; promote growth in our Orthodox Faith and to provide educational, social and athletic activities for all singles of our Orthodox Faith."

Since 2003, our Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles have offered monetary donations either to offset event costs or to place in our checking account for

future events. But because we did not have a "tax-exempt ID #", this process was hampered. Therefore on February 14th of this year, we filed for incorporation as a Non-Profit entity under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). As you read this, we are now in stage 2 of this incorporating procedure.

On average, the Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles have 5 to 6 events yearly. All these Events 'happen' through suggestions of our Singles. Our events are held either in one of our a Singles' private homes, an Orthodox Church Hall or a business establishment. The following are some of our events: "Hike and Dine" - where we hike in a National Park and then meet at a local restaurant for a 4-course dinner for \$7. This is a nice outing on a Sunday afternoon in the Fall. "Crab, Ham, Chicken and Veggie Burger Feast"; "Bar-B-Que Feast" at St. Mary's in Falls Church, Va. (OCA); "Winter Wonderland" at Sts. Peter & Paul in Potomac, MD.(Antiochian); Lenten Events and "Carribean Party" at St. Luke in McClean, Va. (OCA); "Cathedral Tour" - we took tours of the National Cathedral, St. Nicholas (OCA) and St. Sophia (Greek Archdiocese) in Washington D.C. on a Saturday afternoon followed by Vespers and then ended the day with a Pork Roast Bar-B-Que, DJ and dancing; 2-hour Mystery Train Ride with professional actors and dinner; "Ski Weekend" at Whitetail over a 3-day Holiday with us attending Vespers at St. Catherine's in Hagerstown, MD. (OCA) and Liturgy at St. Mary's in Chambersburg (Antiochian); "Fifties' Party"; various Lenten service projects; etc.

Participants consistently volunteer to assist in setting up before events, cleaning up after events and helping during events for the main meal and last second preparations. What a wonderful group of Orthodox Christians!

Our singles want to thank Karen Nichols, who has created every event flyer used to advertise and promote all of our activities!

A very special "Thank You" goes to Our Spiritual Advisor, Father Gregory, who not only volunteers time at our events, but also many hours in answering our emails & phone calls. Our communications with Father Gregory generally concern the planning of upcoming events and any special needs of our sin-



gles. A very large "Thank You" also goes to Father Gregory's wonderful spouse, Matushka Alexandra (Sasha) & their 3 sons: Nathaniel, Ben and Alec for permitting Father Gregory to be with the Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles, which takes away their 'family time' - May God Bless You and Grant You Many Healthy Years!!

I'd like to share a remark voiced by one of our Orthodox Clergy who was attending his second Singles' Event. Towards the end of the evening he stated: "You know these gatherings are nice. It's not a pick-up place. Everyone's relaxed, socializing and having a good time." This is to answer a common question asked of Father Gregory and myself: To date, as far as we know, there have been 5 marriages through the Singles Group, where neither person had ever met each other previously. There are now 9 marriages where the couple knew each other previously

but either 'lost contact with each' for some 7 to 15 years and re-met at our event or just never talked to each other until they attended a Singles Event.

Every single, Orthodox Christian (age 21 and older) is invited to attend our next Pan-Orthodox Christian Singles Event on the "Odyssey", a 3-hour Boat Cruise on the Potomac. For \$15 per person, you receive a 5-course buffet meal, continuous music with a DJ and dancing (bring your favorite ethnic music for the DJ to play!) & one free beverage. This event is scheduled for Saturday evening May 17, 2008, from 8 to 11 p.m.

Any questions, comments or suggestions, please contact Father Gregory Safchuk at [gsafchuk@hotmail.com](mailto:gsafchuk@hotmail.com) or 301.320.0739 or myself, Diana Haverlack, at [dianahav@earthlink.net](mailto:dianahav@earthlink.net) or 703.759.1551. ❖

## OCF Activities at Rutgers University

*By Christina Cassar*

The Orthodox Christian Fellowship group, more popularly known as OCF, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, has had its best year yet. In just two short semesters, we have more than tripled in size, growing from just five members to over 15. We have weekly meetings consisting of a selected speaker, usually one of our own members, speaking on a decided topic, group discussion, prayer and fellowship.

The group has been a refreshing source of connection and interaction between fellow Orthodox students while at school. Throughout the past several months, Rutgers OCF has been extremely involved in the local parish lives as well as the community. We have hosted events such as movie nights featuring documentaries on world issues such as poverty in

Uganda, volunteered as a group at Elijah's Promise soup kitchen in New Brunswick, and even hosted our own regional retreat including participants from Rutgers as well as Rider University, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and the University of Delaware.

Our growing involvement is made possible through the generous funding of the Diocese of Washington and New York, the aid of Mother of God Church in Princeton, and St. Stephen's Church in Piscataway and we are very grateful for their support. In the upcoming semesters, we hope to continue being involved in the community, expand our membership even further, and continue to reach out to our fellow college students in the name of Christ. ❖



Jacob's  
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## Christ the Savior Mission - Stafford, Virginia

by Stavroula Conrad

Jacob's  
well

Summer/Fall 2008

### *The Beginning*

After a profound spiritual vision, an Orthodox person residing in Stafford County wrote a letter to Metropolitan Herman asking his blessing and seeking God's will for a new all-English Mission Parish in Stafford, Virginia. His Beatitude gave his blessing several months later in person, instructing us to celebrate a first Vespers and organizational meeting, and to send him a report from this event. Within a few days of having received our report, Metropolitan Herman granted his blessing formally establishing our Mission in Stafford, and for celebrating our first

Divine Liturgy on Pentecost Sunday, 2004. And, as we requested, he assigned Archpriest Michael Roshak to be our founding priest.

The community emerged from a diverse gathering of Orthodox faithful covering a widespread geographic area, spanning from south of Washington, DC to north of Richmond, Virginia. The core group of founders had been members of the St. Nicholas/St. John of Kronstadt Orthodox Chapel on nearby Quantico Marine Base until it closed in 2000. Others had been driving over an hour or so to various Orthodox parishes in the Washington, DC, area, while

still others had left the ethnic Greek parish about 25 miles south and were seeking a new parish home. All were brought together by the Holy Spirit to help establish this local Body of Christ.

### *Beautiful Worship Space*

Through an extraordinary sequence of events, we have been blessed to lease a beautiful church facility known as the Clifton Chapel from the local Episcopal Church. The Clifton Chapel, built in the 1840's and recently restored, is on the National Historic Register. It is situated at the end of a picturesque country lane and surrounded by lush woods. A two-story support building is being newly constructed by the owner, housing a fellowship hall, classrooms, kitchen, restrooms and storage space, and is expected to be com-

pleted this summer. Until the second building is ready, we hold our Fellowship Hour using two tables at the rear of the church, and the restroom is a portable one, located outside!

Our worship items remain permanently in place, not needing to set-up or take down each week. We have been gifted a number of precious liturgical items and furnishings from sister parishes, including two Chalice sets, the Tabernacle, the Gospel, and the Shroud.

### *Life of the Parish Community*

When asked "How's the Mission going?" we respond "Heaven on earth!"

By God's great Mercy and Providence, our young Mission community continues to grow and flourish. Over the past four years, we've had ten Baptisms, six Chrismations, and participated in the Ordination of a Deacon. We currently have five catechumens. Parishioners frequently partake of the Divine Eucharist and Confession. We have a high level of parishioner participation in the life and diakonia (ministries) of the Mission. We regularly have visitors and inquirers from around the region at our Vespers and Liturgies.

God granted the joy of bringing Metropolitan Herman, an archbishop, a bishop, a chancellor, over twelve priests and five deacons, a subdeacon, two readers, a seminarian, along with two theologians and two iconographers to visit and concelebrate with us over the past four years. Our flock greatly benefited from these visitors and the instruction they offered. We've also hosted numerous community events over the past four years.

Members of our Mission community pray for and support each other. We share special moments as well as trials and struggles with each other, lifting each other up in prayer. The Fellowship Hour is very well attended and people linger well into the afternoon, with parishioners taking turns each week offering the meal.

We seek out and participate in area-wide efforts to help those in need ~ in addition to supporting Orthodox charitable appeals ~ having worked with such efforts as helping a Hurricane Katrina family raise funds to rebuild their home, regularly contributing to the regional food bank, contributing school

*Continued on page 31*



*Exterior of the Clifton Chapel, our temple we lease from the Aquia Episcopal Church, circa 1840's, and on the National Historic Register.*



### Fr. Paul Shafran Honored for 60 Years of Ministry

The Very Reverend Paul Shafran was honored this past December on the occasion of his 60th anniversary of ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Father Paul was ordained on December 28, 1947, by Bishop Nikon at the Cathedral of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary, New York, NY. At the conclusion of Divine Liturgy last Christmas, Father Paul was presented with a "Gramota" signed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and the Bishops of the Holy Synod of the O.C.A., in grateful recognition of Father Paul's 60 years of "faithful service in the Vineyard of our Lord and to the Orthodox Church in America." Parishioners then came forward to greet Father Paul, expressing their love and gratitude for his many years of service as their Pastor.

After his first assignment, serving as Pastor for three small parishes in rural Ohio, Father Paul served for more than 53 years as Pastor of St. Vladimir Orthodox Church in Trenton, NJ, and is now Pastor Emeritus.

Father Paul and Matushka Mary also celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last fall. Married in Warren, Ohio on Thanksgiving, November 27, 1947, the couple celebrated their "diamond" anniversary this past Thanksgiving with their family. Parishioners joined in a molieben for the couple served by the late Father Eugene Vansuch, who was then Pastor at St. Vladimir's Church, following Divine Liturgy in Trenton on Sunday, November 25, 2007. Immediately afterwards, a reception in honor of Father Paul and Matushka Mary was held at the parish hall. ❖



*Father Shafran (center) shown with the late Father Vansuch (right) and Father Ivan Lymar, Pastor, Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Trenton, Christmas 2007*

### Reflections on the Ministry of Fr. Eugene Vansuch

*From the Parishioners of St. Vladimir's Church, Trenton, NJ*

[Fr Eugene Vansuch fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday March 23, after returning home from a Lenten Deanery service at Mays Landing, NJ.]

Father Eugene was with our parish approximately four months. Although he didn't officially become our Pastor of Record until January 1, 2008, he started to know us individually during the month of December. Knowing Father Eugene for a brief time was like knowing him for a lifetime. He was deliberate in his actions so as not to offend anyone, yet knowing exactly where he wanted to take our parish. This endeared him to every parishioner, even the most skeptical. His plan was to make our parish a missionary one with a known presence in the neighborhood. There is no question had he lived he would have achieved this goal.

In his short tenure, he increased church attendance remarkably. Most of this was due to his wonderful sermons where he could relate present life to the Gospel message for that Sunday. He did this with real warmth and a degree of humor, but there was no question that his point was fully understood.

He had visions and ideas about the use of all of our church facilities - church hall, cemetery, and recreational area. His initial focus was on our hall and how it could become a financial asset of the church and a venue for activities in our neighborhood. Let's just say he had vision, and he could lead.

I don't think we can say anymore. His sudden departure devastated our parish and the grief has not yet passed. We are praying that we will be blessed with another pastor equally as loved and respected. ❖



*Mission Vespers, Mays Landing, NJ - Fr. Eugene fourth from right.*



## Where God Guides, He Provides:

*Christ the Savior Church - Dagsboro, Delaware*

In the past few months, Christ the Savior Church, the Delmarva Orthodox Mission, has undergone some exciting changes, the most notable of which has been our move to our new home in Dagsboro, Delaware.

The new location on Route 26 was unanimously selected by parishioners because it was more centrally situated between the northern and southern beaches, closer to churchgoers homes and also provided enough room to accommodate the growing congregation which has steadily risen since the founding of the church in 2000. For directions and pictures of the new location, please see our website: [orthodoxdelmarva.org](http://orthodoxdelmarva.org).

As anyone who has moved a church, or even a home, knows, such an undertaking requires not only a tremendous amount of strategic planning and effort, but also divine guidance and assistance. And for this reason we thank both to the Lord and also those through whom He has worked - our faithful parishioners, friends, and supporters.



and lived in the Orthodox Church. For this we ask the continued prayers and support of our sister parishes in Delmarva and throughout the Diocese of Washington and New York. May the Lord continue to bless and guide us in all things - to Him be the glory! ❖



Since entering our new church on December 30, 2007, we have immediately felt the Lord's blessing hand as we have been pleased to welcome several new families to our community, as well as three adults through chrismation, three children through baptism, and a few inquirers through enrollment in the catechumenate.

Of course, there is still much work to be done as we settle into our new surroundings and continue our task of witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is proclaimed

## St. Innocent Mission, Oneonta, NY

St. Innocent is a mission church in the Leatherstocking District of Upstate New York organized 11 years ago. While we are negotiating for other facilities, we are presently meeting in the basement of Atonement Lutheran Church, Oneonta, NY. Father Kyril Riggs is the rector. Father Riggs was the original priest to serve the fledgling mission and has now come back in his "retirement" to serve us. We have Vespers Saturday evening at 5pm and Liturgy on Sunday at 10am.

Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery, an OCA community of nuns, is nearby in Otego, NY and their help has been immeasurable for our existence. They lead and sing in our choir, head up our children's program, give Father Kyril lodging as he seeks a residence in Oneonta and bolster our faith by their example.

Our numbers are small, but we are a family unit.

We presently have 5 interested inquirers and we pray they will follow through with Orthodox teaching. We have also begun an outreach with the two local colleges, Hartwick and SUNY Oneonta, which has led to the official organization of an OCF group. The mission volunteers once a month at a local free supper program in Oneonta and we are busily preparing for our feast day of St. Innocent in March at which we will be serving a dinner for family and friends. We ask your prayers for our outreach and growth and we invite everyone traveling or vacationing in the area (we are close to Cooperstown with the Farmers Museum and the Baseball Hall of Fame) to join us in worship.

Constance Mace, Sr. Warden (Please call ahead if you are traveling to find out if we have moved to new quarters! (607) 432-3179 or (607) 432-7828 ❖



## Grace Shining Forth: Celebrating the Life and Ministry of Fr. John Nehrebecki

by Fr John Shimchick

Jacob's  
well  
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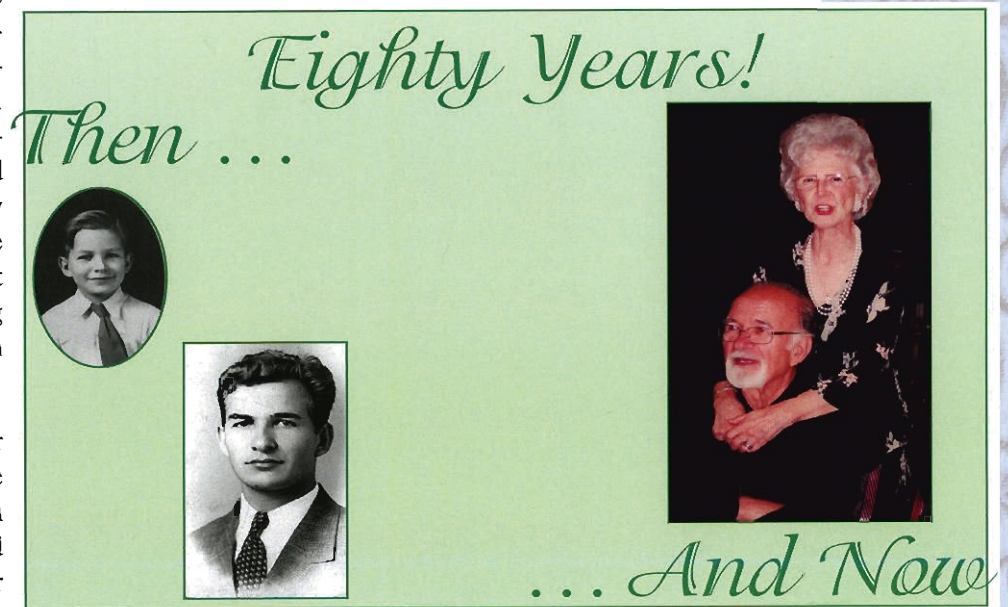
Grace shining forth from your lips like a beacon  
has enlightened the universe.  
It has shown to the world the riches of poverty.  
It has revealed to us the heights of humility.  
Teaching us by your words, O Father John ...

As the story told by his daughter Anastasia goes, each Sunday her boyfriend at the time believed that the words of the hymn and the "Fr John" mentioned above were really the community's weekly song of praise for her father, Fr. John Nehrebecki. Enthusiastic, bold, a forceful and dynamic speaker, it would not be difficult to imagine Fr. John sharing the descriptions attributed in the hymn to St. John Chrysostom. But in listening to the various things mentioned about him and what he himself said during the celebration of his 80th birthday on Sunday May 4, 2008, it might in fact be the first word alone of that hymn that would most appropriately describe his long life and ministry, for in the end, it's all been possible because of God's grace.

His grandson, John, spoke of Fr John's organizational methods where notes, ideas, and expressions have been written down on just about anything and stored in a variety of places. Together with a wide assortment of collectible items, they have become interwoven with the stories that have made them now significant. One has the sense that Fr John's mind has worked like an early form of the internet, where touching one subject, word, historical time, place or fact has led to other stories, times, places, and personalities. Fr. John has been nothing but reflective and comprehensive, and his stories as related especially in his sermons and talks are legendary.

This broadly reflective side has become most interesting to me, and it has been shared in various forms. Fr John has joined several other long-recognized senior priests in formulating and publicly expressing their frustrations and disappointments with the scandals taking place in the Orthodox Church in America. But he is also willing to examine not just the public ministry of the OCA, but to look more closely at what has been the shape of his

own work. He knows on one level what he has been able to accomplish both within his own parish and in the formulation of missions throughout the New Jersey deanery. He knows his strengths, but he also realizes how much he has relied on the help of other people, particularly his wife, Eugenia. Growing up the daughter of a priest there are many things, besides directing the church choir, which she has intuitively known about parish ministry. Fr John acknowledged that in his best moments he has often followed her advice, even to the point of being reminded when cer-



tain parishioners needed extra care and visitations. "She is transparent - you know who she is and what she does," he noted during the banquet. "But I am much more complicated."

I am ever grateful for the senior priests and their wives, like Fr John and Matushka Eugenia, that I have come to know and respect. Men and women who one must associate and think about together, speak about in the same breath for they indeed have had a shared ministry. They have seen much of human nature both within the laity and the clergy, yet they remain faithful, committed to God, and still in love with each other and the Church.

They remain sources through which God's grace continues to shine forth. ♦

## From the Diocesan Music Committee

**Co-Chairpersons:** Doreen Bartholomew, Choir Director, Our Lady of Kazan Church, Sea Cliff, NY  
Carol Wetmore, Choir Director, Holy Trinity Church, Randolph, NJ  
Robert Barber, Choir Director, St. Mark's Church, Bethesda, MD  
**Consultants:** Fr. John Shimchick, Aleksei Shipovalnikov

### 2008 WORKSHOPS

**February 16, 2008,** St. Mark's Church, Bethesda, MD  
**Speaker/Subject:** The V.Rev. Gregory Safchuk - *Choir-Clergy Interaction*; Mr. Ted Markle - *Making the Most of Your Choral Voice*

#### **Curriculum:**

*Clergy-Musician Interaction* - The actions and decisions made by Choir directors should always be done in cooperation with the parish priest, but how does the director know what the priest prefers? Fr. Gregory led a discussion on various aspects of liturgical singing as they apply to Orthodox worship from the clergy's point of view.

*Making the Most of Your Choral Voice* - The English language presents singers with particular difficulties. How do you manage diphthongs? How do you make consonants clear without spoiling the vocal line? How do you make sense of the words so the listener will understand them? These issues and more were covered in this workshop, including demonstrations and group participation with Orthodox chant and other hymnography, presented by a Westminster choir school graduate and professional choral director.

**June 21, 2008,** Holy Trinity Church, East Meadow, NY  
**Speaker/Subject:** The V. Rev. Sergei Glagolev - *Using the Voice in Practice*; Ms. Sharmila Daniel - *Vocal Instruction*

#### **Curriculum:**

*Vocal Instruction* - Excessive use of voices and straining to hit the more difficult notes produce fatigue, sore throat, and laryngitis. Conversely, good singing technique produces a voice with stamina and a fine choir sound. Ms. Daniel, a professional singer and vocal coach, taught workshop attendees some "tricks of the singing trade" including proper posture, correct breathing, voice control and other techniques.

*Using the Voice in Practice* - Fr. Sergei led the group in practical application of Ms Daniel's instruction, singing and interpreting some of the music he has composed for Orthodox choirs.

**October 18, 2008,** Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ  
**Subject and Speakers:** TBD as of 8/1/08

### OTHER 2008 PROJECTS

#### ***Hierarchical Liturgy Guidelines***

A comprehensive and detailed outline with choir cues and other helpful tips, plus sheet music for special hymns and appendices dealing with Molebens and processions, is completed in draft and planned to be available by end-2008.

#### ***The Eight Tones***

As reported in 2007, this project overlapped with plans by the OCA Department of Liturgical Music and Translations. We were unable to coordinate our efforts, so we cancelled the Diocesan project.

#### ***Vespers in Large Type***

In response to several requests, the Dept. has prepared a Vespers book in large type, including music in the basic Obikhod tones, to be available by end-2008.

### ISSUES

#### ***Attendance - Collection of Information***

Attendance at workshops seems to be holding steady at an average of around 20-25 people. This is a reasonable number to justify the workshops, but it indicates that only a small minority of our choir singers, readers, and directors are taking advantage of these valuable and very reasonably priced offerings.

A problem still seems to be that choir members are not getting the information from their priests and/or choir directors. Additionally, our flyers, sent electronically and by snail mail based on OCA website parish listings are in a number of cases being returned as undeliverable.

As in 2007, we ask that you be sure to encourage attendance at workshops and update parish contact listings on the OCA/Diocesan website.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the Diocesan Council approve plans for workshops and projects as described above
- That the Council support and request that parishes update their OCA website information, especially with regard to choir directors.
- That Council delegates encourage their parish musicians to attend the workshops. ♦



## Kyriacos C. Markides and The Mountain of Silence

by Jurretta Jordan Heckscher

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Imagine a book that “makes the deepest dimensions of Orthodox spiritual life accessible . . . for any serious reader.” (Those are the words of Warren Farha, whose remarkable bookstore *Eighth Day Books* was profiled in a previous issue of this magazine.) Would you read it?

If so, you'd be joining the thousands who have already immersed themselves in an extraordinary book about Orthodoxy and the fullness of human possibility: *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) by the Cypriot-American sociologist Kyriacos C. Markides.

*The Mountain of Silence* recounts a series of conversations between Markides and a Greek-Cypriot monk rooted in the traditions of Mount Athos, whom Markides calls simply Father Maximos. The subject of the conversations is the path by which human beings may unite themselves to God. Such a description sounds formidably esoteric, but in fact the book covers a vast range of topics and makes them all straightforwardly accessible, from addiction and angels to the practice of prayer, the problem of illness and suffering, the role of radio and television, the nature of Hell, the laughter of saints, the tension between Divine and human justice, the necessity of sanctity to the Earth's environmental healing, how monks handle the challenges of sex, the society and politics of contemporary Cyprus, and much more. Yet its riches are in the end an intricate spiral encircling an utterly simple truth: Fr. Maximos's conviction that “this is the fundamental issue of our existence, our relationship with God” (pp. 192-93), and that the normal outcome open to all is theosis, union with the infinitely loving and beloved Lord. That theme is also the subject of Markides's sequel, *Gifts of the Desert: The Forgotten Path of Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), which ranges even more broadly to elaborate and illuminate Fr. Maximos's insights through journeys and conversations that engage the living wisdom of

Orthodox Tradition in voices and places across the globe.

Markides's inner journey has been equally extensive. Brought up in the “naïve . . . taken-for-granted faith” of his homogeneously Orthodox family and community in Cyprus, he quickly discovered that “[t]he cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of America, where religion is a preference rather than a fate, shattered that simple security of belief. After ten years of training as a sociologist I was turned from a believer into an agnostic,” he writes, someone who had concluded that “religion was a creation of society” (*The Mountain of Silence*, p.1).

Yet the practice of Transcendental Meditation, along with reading in Asian religions and the work of writers exploring “the interface between modern science and mysticism” led him to question this certainty in turn. In a daring inversion of the scientist's stereotypical critique of religious faith, Markides eventually came to believe that the exclusive materialism of Western science was in fact “a grand illusion, a materialist superstition” that has “imprisoned” Western thought “for the last three hundred years” (p. 3).



Professor Markides, Fr. Siniari and parishioners from  
SS Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia

For a time, this most adventurous of sociologists immersed himself in the eclectic mysticism of non-Christian spiritual healers, but his research ultimately led him to Mount Athos and the full circle of return to his Orthodox roots. It was there that he encountered Father Maximos, and when the latter was sent by his own spiritual father to lead a monastic revival on Cyprus, Markides followed him for the duration of a transformative academic

sabbatical. *The Mountain of Silence* was the result.

Kyriacos Markides is, then, a remarkable man whose remarkable books about Orthodoxy have changed both minds and lives. “I have to admit,” writes one reader of *Gifts of the Desert* on Amazon.com, “that Markides played a role in my

return to my cradle [Orthodox] faith." "I have to say that this book was a real means of grace for me," says another, of *The Mountain of Silence*. What books, one wonders, have had an equally profound effect on Markides himself?

"Philip Sherrard is one writer I would name," he says, particularly Sherrard's *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition*. "He has a deep understanding of the spirituality of the Christian Church," Markides explains, "but does not reject other traditions." In the same vein, he mentions the works of Huston Smith, particularly *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* and *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*. "He is probably one of the wisest people alive about world religions," says Markides, "a practicing Christian with a deep appreciation of other religions. He connects religion and the scientific worldview to see how each addresses different aspects of Divine Reality."

It's downright surprising, in fact, that this man so steeped in Athonite spirituality suggests a reading list as broad-minded and comprehensive as his own spiritual journey. Whereas many Orthodox—including, surely, the vast majority of Orthodox monastics—see esoteric wisdom traditions, meditation practices, and non-Christian mysticism as naïve New Age illusions or worse, Markides states bluntly that "had I not been exposed to these traditions, I would never have gone back to Orthodoxy. There is among many Orthodox today a kind of xenophobia that is harmful to Orthodoxy," he continues. "I feel very enriched by other spiritual traditions. We do not have a monopoly on truth within Orthodoxy, and to say that we do, and that all others are heretics, is a medieval hostility. It is simply not possible to hold to that in the multicultural world that we live in. . . . Orthodoxy allows us to recognize that God is the ultimate mystery and we cannot confine Him with our cultural limitations." He draws a parallel with scientific discovery: "What fascinates me is when I hear Truth being presented in various traditions. Truth itself then has greater power, as in science, where multiple instances of a phenomenon confirm its validity."

Indeed, if experience has made him a visceral ecumenist, Markides is equally impatient with the boundaries that separate science from faith. "What we need," he insists, "is a synthesis of Western and Eastern Enlightenments, the Western Enlightenment of scientific knowledge and the Eastern Enlightenment being that of the great elders of the Orthodox Tradition." To that end, he urges people to read Francis Collins's *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. "Collins is a scientist; he is the head of the

Human Genome Project," Markides points out. "He has converted from agnosticism to belief, and it is science that brought him to God." He likewise recommends Andrew Newburg's *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (which Newburg wrote with Eugene G. d'Aquili and Vince Rause). "We are seeing something of a neo-atheist revival these days, with the popularity of works such as [Richard] Dawkins's and [Christopher] Hitchens's and others'," Markides says. "This work is a counterbalance to that trend. Newburg writes that religious experience is ingrained in our biological makeup—we are formed to be believers."

For Markides himself, a seeker who has literally roamed the world in order to rediscover his home, belief is now ultimately synonymous with Orthodoxy. His life exemplifies T.S. Eliot's insight that "the end of our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." And so it is that his warmest recommendations include works such as *Saint Silouan, the Athonite*, by Archimandrite Sofrony [Sakharov] and *Mother Gabrielia: The Ascetic of Love*. The latter is the work of "a woman who became a nun at the age of sixty, after a lifetime as a podiatrist. She first went to minister to lepers in India, and then she became a nun. She died in her nineties. Her homilies are sheer beauty, spiritual beauty." Markides also singles out for particular praise a recently translated book of writings by the late Elder Porphyrios: *Wounded by Love: The Life and the Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios*. It "demonstrates the wisdom and the beauty of being in a state of God-realization while living on this planet at the same time," Markides says. "He [the Elder] was a miracle worker. We don't need to go to Tibet to find such people; we can find them in our own back yard."

Lamenting that "Orthodoxy's appeal is universal, and yet we hoard it," Markides stresses that all the works he has recommended are books "of universal value, not just to Orthodox, as I have also tried to make the books I have written." Indeed, he is deeply concerned with Orthodoxy's ultimate universality, devoting (for example) much of the conversation with Bishop Kallistos Ware recounted in *Gifts of the Desert* to that very topic.

In personal conversation, Markides relates the story of a Jewish librarian at a Jewish university who came to him and told him how moved he had been by *The Mountain of Silence*. "But," he said, "I am Jewish. How can I pray the Jesus Prayer?" And I told him," Markides remembers, "'Why don't you pray the prayer of the Fathers: God, enlighten my darkness?' And he wrote me back: 'It is wonderful; I am so happy!'" The Light of Christ illumines all. ❖



### The Right Time and the Right Man:

*An Interview with Fr Michael Tassos, Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America*

[Fr Michael visited the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ over the weekend of February 2-3, 2008. The following interview took place with parishioner, Robert Flanagan.]

**What is your background, and how does it suit you for the position of OCA Treasurer?**

I grew up in a family that belonged to ROCOR (the Russian Church Outside of Russia). The Russian side of my family emigrated to the U.S. after World War II and settled in the Los Angeles area. By training I am an accountant, a CPA, and I did my initial training at Price Waterhouse. After college my work as an accountant was mainly with increasingly larger medical practices, culminating in a large, national surgery center business in Beverly Hills called Specialty Surgical Centers. Inspired by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Fr. John Meyendorff and Fr. Thomas Hopko, I attended St Vladimir's Seminary in the early 1990's. I met my wife, Christina, at St. Vlad's and after we were married we moved to Charleston, WV, where I served as a deacon for one year, and then was ordained to the priesthood and served as pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Beckley, West Virginia. In September 2002 we moved to Southern California and, since I had a career and did not require a full salary from the Church, I served as the pastor of Holy Cross Antiochian mission in Palmdale, CA.

**Why and how did you land in the job of OCA Treasurer at this time?**

For a long time I watched developments unfold in the OCA from the Antiochian sidelines. It caused me great pain to see such a mismanaged operation and know that I had the skills to help with a significant part of the problem. Earlier in my life, as my career as an accountant was growing, I spoke with my spiritual father about a conflict I was feeling between my employment and my vocation. He told me to go ahead with my career, assuring me that there would come a time when the Church would be able to use my skills.

As the crisis with the OCA unfolded and it became apparent to me that I had skills to offer, I began to speak

with my wife to assess the possibility of taking the treasurer position should it be offered. With her approval I applied for the position. I have to tell you that I actually turned down the job after it was formally offered to me. I came to New York in October and while the meetings with the Chancery staff went well, I did not have a particularly great meeting with His Beatitude. I guess I just didn't really know what to expect. So when I got back to California, I expressed my concerns to the Chancellor and told him that I would like to remove my name from consideration. He asked me if there was anything that could get me to

change my mind and I told him, never actually thinking that it would happen, that it would take the Metropolitan calling me personally and making the request before I would reconsider. I honestly did not think that His Beatitude would actually call, but in fact he did. It was the phone call from His Beatitude that caused me to reconsider because in this one simple encounter I saw something that I hadn't seen before: a very genuine interest in changing

things. In hindsight I believe I mistook His Beatitude, I do believe that he genuinely cares about the Church and truly wants to see the Church move forward in a healthy and positive manner.

**How does your position as a priest under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman affect your freedom to act as you see fit as Treasurer?**

I've often been asked this question and it's one I can answer easily: I see no conflict in the two lines of authority. If a situation should arise where I was asked to do something that conflicted with my professional ethics, the latter obligation would outstrip my obedience to His Beatitude. A recent example: I discovered that the bishops' stipends for 2008 were eliminated from the budget. His Beatitude's car allowance was also part of these stipends. I brought it to His Beatitude's attention and he asked me what I was going to do. I told him that since the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod had both approved the budget I did not feel that it was in my purview to change any of the amounts. Since this conversation, His Beatitude has never said anything more to me about it. I will also go so far as to say that even if he had directly asked me to pay the



*Fr. Michael Tassos, Fr. John Shimchick,  
and members of the Parish Council*

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stipends I wouldn't have done so. Clearly I am under His Beatitude's omophorion and I have an obedience to him; however, just as I have an obedience to him, I also have a responsibility to my CPA license and to the entire Church at large.

***What is your role in the resolution of the financial situation in the OCA?***

Most importantly, I have to restore financial credibility to the Treasurer's department. Imagine the situation when I arrived. It was almost the equivalent of 10 years of records having been thrown in a basket. You have no idea what's important and what is not. The only way to truly have any clue as to what you are looking at it is to painstakingly read each and every piece of paper. So this is where I've started. My immediate goal is to have a credible, detailed, and complete financial report for the year 2007 available as soon as possible (note: this report was posted on the OCA website on March

14, 2008). At the same time I am trying to complete accurate monthly financial reports for the year 2008. In this regard I'd like to stress one of the fundamental differences between lawyers

and accountants: lawyers, for good reason, have a philosophy of keeping information to themselves - too much information can be harmful; on the other hand, accountants have a view that too little information can be harmful, to err on the side of distributing too much information. At the present time I'm really glad to be the latter. I believe my second most important task is to help the Church learn to live within its means. There is one common theme that has served me well over the years, avoid deficits. We are never going to move forward with all of the great work that the Church has to do if we continue to run deficits every year. The third most important task is to help create a vision for the future. What is the role of the central administration? Where should the headquarters of the OCA be? Where should we be planning for the future? There are many big issue questions that we haven't even begun to address yet.

***As you become familiar with the financial situation in the OCA, how do you see it improving? )***

One of the important steps that has taken place is the hiring of a new accounting firm to do our work. The former audit firm Lambrides, Lamos, Moulthrop & Co. was involved in a variety of tasks that were unrelated to the actual audit. For example, in addition to the

audit, they sold us a very complex financial software package, more than what we needed, and one that required significant training to utilize. So in the interest of getting the Church's financial records moving forward as quickly as possible we have moved to the non-profit version of Quickbooks, which is much easier to use, and sufficient for now for the size of our operation. I would still like to explore using the more expensive software program since it would streamline some things such as keeping various database lists, but this will not take place for several more months. I have also been approached by another organization that would be willing to purchase the software program.

***From what you have seen, is it likely a single person is responsible for the current financial situation in the OCA?***

I believe the answer to this question is "no." Even if one can point to a major culprit in the mess the OCA got into, it seems there were many players in creating the current situation. I think it is important to emphasize that there is greater evidence of incompetence than of malicious wrongdoing. Don't get me wrong, there was malicious wrongdoing, however, it was exacerbated by a lack of controls and staff that did not have the necessary expertise in their respective areas. I can compare it with going to the Church body, picking out three bright people, and asking them to evaluate the security system in use at the nearest prison. These people might be bright, but they are not competent to evaluate such a system. I think this can be said of various committees in the past. They were made up of intelligent, well-intentioned people, but there are a hundred ways those people can be fooled. For instance, we recently learned that a copy of one of the financial reports that was given to the Metropolitan Council several years ago was deliberately doctored from the original. To my mind, there was no one here at that point in time that would have had the wherewithal to actually pick up on this change. My hope is that the Special Investigative Committee will seriously examine all of the evidence. Even if some individuals did not go to the extent of committing outright fraud, they clearly had a hand in the mess and it seems to me that they bear some level of responsibility.

***Under what circumstances would you consider your attempt to right the financial balance of the OCA to be a failure?***

I am sure that I have failed when it comes to assessing how much work would be necessary to clean up the financial affairs of the Church and I was naïve to think that I could do it alone. That being said, while moving the financial ship hasn't been easy, we are clearing steering in a different direction and this is very positive.





***What plan is in place for cutting overhead costs at the central administration and restoring the funding of activities that reflect the mission of the church, e.g., evangelization, missions, education, outreach?***

There is none at present but I would like to preface this by saying that a lot of the dirty work occurred before my arrival. The salaries were cut by an annualized \$228,000 and the bishop's stipends were cut by another \$100,000. There are still a few immediate things to address this year however there are some bigger issues that will take considerably longer to sort through. An example of this is the chancery building and property itself. I have yet to propose it but it seems to me that owning and maintaining the property at Syosset is counterproductive or at a minimum a very inefficient use of the Church's resources. I sit in an office and see beautiful trees and grounds. But who else in the Church has that view? Why do we maintain a piece of property that gives so little to the Church at large? If we sold it, say for ten million dollars, we could pay off all our debt and have 8 million to invest and use the interest for a lot of Church projects that more reflect the mission of the OCA.

***What is your role in the potential resolution of the larger issues of dysfunction in the OCA?***

I see my role as an important, but narrow one. I am to straighten out the financial processes of the central administration by the application of good accounting practices and ensure a high standard of financial ethics. I hope that a successful accomplishment of that task will be to restore financial trust in the Central Administration, and play a significant role in a broader restoration of trust in the leadership of the OCA.

***What do you see as the current strengths of the OCA? What major weaknesses?***

There are many major strengths of the OCA, particularly the number of people who really care about the Church, both clergy and laity. There is so much that is right about the OCA, from its monasteries and seminaries to liturgical music, iconography, theology, and history. These are the greatest strengths of the OCA. However, there are also some weaknesses. A major weakness is the lack of uniformity and consistency. In the Antiochian church uniformity was strongly encouraged. For instance in the OCA there are "you" parishes and there are "thee" parishes. There is no such thing as a "you" parish vs. a "thou" parish in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Conferences are standardized, curriculum is standardized, liturgical practices and music are standardized. The same simply cannot be said across the U.S. and Canada for the OCA. We live in a global society and we are just clicks away from knowing what is going on thousands of miles away from us. We are also a lot more mobile. One morning you can be in Maine

and that same evening you can be in San Francisco. I did not fully appreciate the uniformity years ago, but now it means a lot more to me. People need to feel connected and it would be nice if they felt connected not just to a particular Diocese, but to the Orthodox Church in America. It is my opinion that more standardization would help this considerably.

***If not withholding what?***

I have suggested above that greater involvement of clergy and laity at the parish level would be a healthy thing for the OCA. I am reminded too, when I think of the need to exert pressure, of the campaigns of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. to bring an end to systemic dysfunction. At the very least letters should be coming to Syosset with constructive suggestions and requests. There are many ways to say things and I believe everyone at the Chancery is willing to listen to suggestions. But the presence of people would undoubtedly have a greater effect. I think lay and clergy need to interact with greater intensity with their bishops and the Metropolitan. I have heard that in some Dioceses this is already occurring. Where the bishop is, his people should be, and not only to sing "Eis polla eti, despota." There is a line in a prayer often attributed to the Optina Elders that says that we should conduct ourselves in manner where we neither "embitter nor embarrass" others. I believe the same is true in giving our opinions in the Church. We should all feel that the Church is our home. However, even in our own homes there are rules of civility and respect. Finally, I believe participation at the All-American Council will be very important. This next All-American Council will be different and will most likely help to plot the course of the OCA for years to come.

*[Given the date when this interview took place, Fr. Michael was asked if he wished to update anything. He requested that the following statement be included.]*

***It has been reported that you have recently returned to California. How is this impacting your work as Treasurer?***

Because of some family health issues I returned to California in mid April. Believe it or not, I begin almost every day with a very extensive phone call to New York where I speak with the accounting staff and often with my colleagues. I have a remote desktop connection to the accounting files at the chancery and I have on-line access to all of the banking information. Invoices and expense reimbursement requests are emailed to me throughout each day and we usually have a number of phone calls every day. I am also making monthly trips back to New York. It is not ideal but it does work. I hope that I will be able to return in a few months with my family but the health issues must get resolved first. ♦



### Preparing our Children for Marriage: Part One

by Kerry Pappas

Given the divorce rate in the United States that has been hovering at about fifty per cent for the last twenty years, many communities of faith are offering and even requiring couples preparing for marriage to participate in a comprehensive premarital program. Presently, Orthodox churches across America use various means of premarital preparation, which range from one or two informal meetings with the parish priest to a required systematic program of preparation. While research has shown that premarital preparation is a helpful tool in preparing couples for marriage, especially for the first few years, it is vital for parents to recognize that the process of preparing for marriage begins at a very young age.



The purpose of this, the first of three articles, is to explore a vision for marriage: what and how our children learn from us about marriage, and how we, as parents, can better nurture our children to become healthy, holy men and women who are prepared to enter into the sacred covenant of marriage, if that is the path they choose. This article will then be followed by two others in the coming year, which will focus on the actual, intentional preparation for marriage, and finally, on marriage itself.

A wise person once told me that women learn how to be women and wives from their mothers, men learn how to be men and husbands from their fathers, and both men and women learn what marriage is like from their parents. A cousin of mine once commented to his father that he had responded to a situation exactly as his father would have reacted. My uncle's sarcastic but accurate response was, "Who do you expect me to respond like, Henry Fonda?" Many of us have read the poem, "Children learn what they live," and all of us know that "actions speak louder than words." Let us now take the opportunity to look more closely at a model for marriage and the tremendous opportunity and responsibility we have to model a godly marriage to our children every day.

The church has given us the most perfect image of marriage in our Lord Jesus Christ. This image is most vividly offered to us in the first few days of Holy Week, in which we celebrate the Bridegroom services that convey to us in striking ways the relationship of

the groom, Jesus Christ, to His bride, the Church. In the icon of the "Bridegroom," we see Christ depicted holding the rod he was beaten with and a crown of thorns around his head. This icon conveys to us the heart and soul of Orthodox Christian marriage--Jesus Christ, willingly laying down his life for us in perfect, unconditional love, a love he both preached and lived, which culminated with His passion and resurrection. From this image of the Bridegroom being wedded to His wife, the Church, we can learn much about marriage. When Jesus married us, the Church, he freely gave himself to us by laying down his life for us in the most generous act of love.

Alongside this image of Christ the Bridegroom, let us also consider Jesus' teaching to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Two points are most salient in this teaching for marriage, first, love of self. This can be a difficult concept for Orthodox Christians to embrace, but it is the Gospel teaching. If we are gracious and merciful toward ourselves, we are gracious and loving toward our spouse. If we are critical toward ourselves, we are critical toward our spouse. If we take care of ourselves-physically, mentally, and spiritually-we will have more resources from which to love our spouse. If our inner resources are depleted, we will have little to give to our spouse. Those who are or have been parents with young children know that our tendency is to give so much of our energy and effort to our children that we deplete our inner resources and have little to give to our spouse, our closest neighbor with whom we live day in and day out. So, healthy, holy self-care that is grounded in prayer and worship and relies on the grace of God is essential for a loving marriage relationship.

Secondly, we are taught to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Who is your closest neighbor if you are married? I have come to understand that my closest neighbor is my husband, then my children. From the love that is learned and practiced in the home, spouse for spouse, parents for children, and children for parents, flows the love that is extended beyond the home.

Henry Nouwen, a prolific Roman Catholic writer, once wrote that the greatest gift parents can give to their children is their love for one another. He did not say that the greatest gift we give to our children is opportunity, a good education, material security, or

## Special Features

love for them, though we do try to provide all of these and more for our children. However, if we love our spouse with a love that is graced and infused with the love of God, that love is more important for the well-being of our children than anything we do for or with our children.

What does this love look like? It is patient. When our spouse is late getting home from work again, we are not accusatory but rather seek to understand why and try to work out a plan that is acceptable to both of us. It is kind. We remember those things our spouse enjoys receiving, and we offer them generously; a kind word, that special flower, a favorite meal, a cup of tea together, etc. It is slow to anger. We try to understand our spouse's actions before becoming angry, and if we are justified in our anger, we let it subside before dealing with the action that provoked the anger. We do not react in the moment and let our anger get the best of us. It is merciful. We keep on giving the second chance and do not throw down the gauntlet by accusingly using words such as always and never.

Love is forgiving. We are regularly saying I am sorry, and please forgive me; and our spouse responds by forgiving us "seventy times seven." We do not allow resentments and bitterness to develop. Rather, we work to resolve anything that might breed bitterness and resentment. It is gracious. We keep the surprise and delight of our love alive through "extravagant" acts of grace toward our spouse, like offering a genuine loving response to an outburst of anger or planning a surprise date to our spouse's favorite restaurant.

This love is also tender, affectionate, and sensual. We drop everything to greet one another after a long day with a warm hug and kiss. We are considerate of the other in our lovemaking and not consumed with getting our own needs met. It covers sin; it does not expose it in the presence of others. We do not point out our spouse's weaknesses to anyone, even jokingly. It is not taken for granted or assumed. Taking our spouse's love for granted is a great danger, especially for Christians who take the covenant of marriage seriously, just assuming that no matter what, our spouse will always be there.

This love is mutual. One spouse does not lord over the other; both submit to each other. Thus, decisions are made mutually by agreement. It has its peaks and valleys, but it endures. We work through the difficulties and seek help when needed. It sometimes feels good; at other times it feels terrible or it doesn't feel at all. When it feels good, we rejoice. When it feels terrible or doesn't feel at all, we dig in, and with God's

grace we act through our will to love our spouse. So, we take out the smelly garbage at midnight even if it is the last thing we want to do. For, love, in the end is more a matter of will than feeling. It is an eternal commitment with eternal consequences. It is not "until death do us part."

All of these ways of expressing love sound great, don't they? Daily, however, we fail at loving our spouse. We are quick to anger and say hurtful things to our spouse. We become sarcastic. We take our spouse for granted and do not even realize we are doing so. Instead of forgiving, we become bitter and sometimes even hold grudges against our spouse. We try to control our spouse and get our own way. We simply stop showing affection.

What do we do with our daily failures and the unresolved issues that can build over the years? We keep getting up after we fall down and seek forgiveness from our spouse. If we don't, we may allow resentments to build to the point where the relationship dies. As we all know relationships do sometimes die, even the ones with the best intentions in the life of the Church. Let us guard with our lives the most precious human relationship God has given us and not succumb to the temptation of simply letting things go and allowing them to build. Let us vigilantly attend to our marriages. This is probably one of the most important lessons we offer our children in modeling marriage to them in a culture in which many enter marriage with the attitude that if it doesn't work, they have an easy out-divorce. Let us teach our children through our example that when things get difficult, we do our best to work through them, seeking and offering forgiveness and invoking the grace and mercy of God to move forward.

In Jesus' marriage to us, the Bridegroom to the Church, He willingly and freely laid down His life, as each of us is called to do for our spouse. We can only offer this kind of love, however, if we have the appropriate inner resources from which to do so. That comes from daily growth in Christ and the transformation of all of who we are: mind, soul, heart, and body. If our children live with two parents who love God and whose lives are being transformed by the grace of God, they will have parents who genuinely love one another. And that is the greatest gift we can offer to them so that when the time comes for them to be married, they will know what a genuine, Christ-centered marriage is.

*[Kerry Pappas is an adjunct faculty member at St. Vladimir's Seminary.] ♦*

Jacob's  
well  
Summer/Fall 2008



## **The Spiritual Lives of Soldiers: Part I - Preparing for War**

*Archpriest Mark Koczak*

*Lieutenant Commander, Chaplain Corps, US Navy (retired)*

*St. Mark Orthodox Church - Bethesda, Maryland*

### **Introduction (Training)**

It was my great humble joy to spend the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as the command chaplain aboard USNS COMFORT. The Navy and the Church had trained me for over 15 years for this role. I was the senior chaplain and the moral and spiritual advisor for the commanding officer who owned the Command Religious Program that I was directly responsible for.

The military, all branches, trains each member for war from the very beginning of their time of service. The US military's main job is to defend our country. From the first day of boot camp or officers' training, each of us had an understanding that we could go to war. Our initial training, and other military education helped us to learn our jobs and to lead others. I spent 7 years out of my 20 years in the Navy as a chaplain at training commands, Navy and Marine Corps. Deploying for any reason, war or otherwise, is a very serious thing. I quickly developed questions for sailors and Marines that would help them to explore their spiritual lives and thus be complete human beings in wartime or in peacetime. Only the chaplain, and this is one of his purposes for being in the military, can prepare the military member in this.

### **Who are you?**

This was the very first question that I have asked sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen when they came to talk to me as their chaplain. Nor surprising the usual answer was, "I don't know, sir." After hearing this a few thousand times, I was not surprised. Since most of the military, about 60%, is made up of 18 to 25 year olds, confusion about self is pretty much the norm. My job was to walk them through,

simply, a definition of their spiritual life, which encompassed all of their life. Many had no spiritual development in their own faith, came from dysfunctional families and came into the military, voluntarily since 1973, for a myriad of interesting reasons. I would very often take out my own military ID card

and talk about their responsibility to themselves, the oath that they took upon entering, their families and their country. This was basic human being 101 stuff. To say that the young are often confused is an understatement. Throw in young marriages, young families and so on; you have some problems. In the military, each and every one of us belongs to a unit, a small

group of people. In my experience, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard have the best idea of the unit and how it works.

Living in this military world at shore and at sea can be very hard. At war, who you are and your place in your unit are of paramount importance. As chaplain, I found my job was to help them put themselves together; sometimes this was simple, sometimes not so simple.

I spent countless hours in various training events talking and explaining about simple human topics from the orientation to a unit to every part of military life, including spirituality in the Navy's alcohol rehab program, spirituality on a deployment, and thus spirituality at war.

Another important dimension of the military is leadership. The longer someone is in the service, the more likely they will lead others. I directly led five people during OIF. They were mine. I was directly



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responsible for them 24/7. A good leader needs to do two things. Know your job and know your people. In the military where your job can be very dangerous whether at war or not, good leadership is of utmost importance. As a chaplain, I had a wealth of good leadership examples to use from our Lord to the saints.

One of my most important jobs was to advise the unit's leadership. The chaplain is the only generalist in the military unit. He is concerned with the spiritual welfare of all; and thus must have an idea of their morale at all times. Balancing all of this on a ship at sea was often mind-bending. I certainly prayed a lot for wisdom and understanding in dealing with the many people I would encounter each day.

The last dimension of 'who are you' concerns the nature of the job of the military member. There is a possibility that a military member may have to kill another human being in the line of duty. The military recognizes this possibility and prepares the member in a number of ways. The first, as mentioned above, is training to do your job. And with equal importance, training for safety. Everyone trains and drills safety the moment they come on duty to the moment they leave the service. On a ship, five drills each day, from man overboard to fire control, are not unusual. Marines train with weapons constantly before they are deployed to a war zone. The sailor or Marine knows that after voluntarily joining the service, (there has been no draft since 1973), and months/years of training what their job is. The military provides mental health professionals for those with real mental instabilities. Conscientious Objectors are processed in a very direct way. As a military chaplain, I was directly involved with over 20 conscientious objector cases. I recommended less than half for religious reasons. This very realistic way of working with the job of a sailor or Marine to kill in battle does not overlook the emotions that may come out. Spiritually, each and every member has made clear choices using their free will well before battle.

## *Where are you?*

The second question I often asked my people concerned where they were. This was a double-edged question. The obvious answer would be right here. Some of them got that one. During my over three years at sea, that question could be confusing. During OIF on COMFORT, because over 75% of the sailors had not been on a ship before and also

because of our limited schooling in the USA on geography did not know exactly where we were at. I made it my job (okay, I like maps - charts at sea) to know where we were. That we spent most of our time in the Persian Gulf making an oval 3 miles wide and 12 miles long in the northern part of gulf was a great comfort to much of the crew.

The other edge, for the military, concerns their life on active duty. We are owned by the military, and thus this is not a day job nor is it McDonald's. During wartime this was obvious to most. The question of where are you should also concern your relationship with God. For the unchurched, many people in the military, this is a hard question. To others it was simple. During wartime, especially in the combat zone, many would think about God.

Many would go to church services. Part of my job was to provide the opportunity for services of many faiths. On COMFORT we had 47 services each week from 8 different faith groups and over 60% of crew attended. During predeployment training I often spoke about the military members' relationship with God, their faith community and how that could develop during their time at sea; thus more training, especially about where are you.

## *Conclusion*

The military does a fine job of training their people for their individual job and for being a leader of others. The chaplain's job is to bring all of this together and to constantly remind them that they are human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

The day the war started in March 2006 a young corpsman came up to me on the deck of the ship as we watched the missiles going overhead, the rockets red glare. He asked me whether we would be safe on the ship. Being a little too literal minded at times, I went through a couple minutes talking about where we were and that we were being protected. I realized I was losing him. I reassured him we were safe and here to perform an important job that only this ship and crew could do, heal the wounded. I realized I had waited 15 years for that question. All of the prayers, the training in seminary and in Navy courses came down to a simple question.

*[Fr Mark Koczak is attached to St. Mark Orthodox Church, Bethesda, Maryland.] ♦*

**Jacob's  
well**  
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## Away From Her

Reviewed by Jack Wheeler

The film *Away From Her* tells the story of an old married couple coming to terms with the stark reality of Alzheimer's disease. Early in the story Fiona's (played by Julie Christie) memory begins to fade as her behavior becomes increasingly inexplicable to her beloved husband Grant (played by Gordon Pinset). Grant slowly and reluctantly believes it may be the early stages of Alzheimer's.

Surrounded by frigid temperatures Canadian writer and director Sarah Polley uses the cold of winter as a character that adds to the somberness of the film. Through shots, editing, and dialogue the audience can never escape the icy feel of the season or bitterness of the disease. The best films can be measured by the pacing of each scene. This film does very well in that every scene thrusts you into the next.

With the use of flashback we get glimpses of Grant and Fiona's life together, a long marriage that has had its ups and downs. As Fiona starts to lose her memory Grant believes he can care for her and is determined not to lose her. However, after various incidents, such as Fiona putting a frying pan in the freezer, forgetting the name of wine on which she was somewhat an expert, and getting lost close to her home it becomes increasingly difficult for Grant to attend to her. In a period of lucidity Fiona pleads with Grant to allow her to go to a facility better designed for her needs. One gets the sense that she is trying to rescue her husband from herself. Grant is resistant to the move but agrees and plans for her stay at the facility to be brief and their relationship to remain unchanged. In the flashbacks much is conveyed through actions rather than dialogue. However, the technique is overused and the story mechanism starts to get repetitive.

As Fiona settles into the facility and Grant makes daily visits he becomes increasingly distressed by Fiona's attentions to Aubrey, another resident. Marianne (played by Olympia Dukakis) enters the story when Grant goes to meet her at her home to discuss Fiona and her husband Aubrey. The conversation between

## Silent as a Stone

Book by Jim Forest

Illustrations by Dasha Panchesya

Reviewed by Elisabeth Graham

"No matter how much love you give, you never have less." Mother Maria said long ago. Mother Maria shows this in the book, *Silent as a Stone*. When Mother Maria of Paris finds out that the Nazi soldiers are going to send Jewish men, women, and children to concentration camps, she is crushed. When she goes to comfort all of the Jewish people, almost all of them have one request, to save their children. She knows she must help in some way. So, she constructs a plan with her garbage collecting friend, Pierre, to put Jewish children in trash cans. There, they must be silent as a stone.

Dasha Panchesya really did a wonderful job with the illustrations in this book. She showed how characters felt in her drawings. Everyone and everything looks so realistically drawn, especially the detail work. Her drawings complete the story.

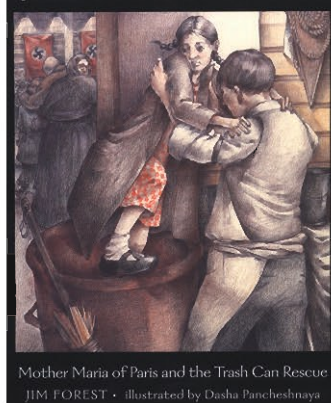
My absolute favorite part was the historical note. It tells you a lot about how Elizaveta Plenko came to be Mother Maria. She grew up in an Orthodox Christian home with her parents in Latvia. She was known a Liza by her friends and family.

Liza's father died when she was fourteen, and she didn't believe in God for a period of time. It was a while until she believed again. By that time, she was in Paris and had a family. When her daughter died of influenza, she became devastated, and turned to God for help. Then, her eyes were opened, and she now knew her purpose in life was to help people and teach the way of God. It was then she became Mother Maria.

Over all, I give this book five stars. Jim Forest really did a great job, and the book left me speechless. I was completely enthralled by his writing, but Dasha Panchesya's colored pencil drawings were completely amazing. If you like historical fiction and vivid pictures, *Silent as a Stone* is for you!

(Elisabeth Graham is a middle school student and attends the Church of the Holy Cross in Medford, NJ.) ♦

### SILENT AS A STONE



Mother Maria of Paris and the Trash Can Rescue  
JIM FOREST • illustrated by Dasha Panchesya



# Jacob's Well - Summer/Fall 2008

*You Must Read This ... Continued from page 16*



*Father Michael Sekela addressing the community.*

supplies for needy families in Stafford County, and taking a weekly collection of funds for the poor, distributing it to those in need both within our congregation and to people in the greater community. We have an on-going appeal for non-perishable food, distributed monthly to local food banks.

As an outreach to the residential neighbors who live on the narrow country lane leading to our church facility, a parishioner sponsored the re-graveling of

the lane; and as an outreach to our landlord, Aquia Episcopal Church, the graveling of the parking area around our building was also sponsored.

Two young Cub Scouts earned their religious emblem awards.

We gathered for our first parish picnic and have been hosted several times in parishioners' homes for special events.

On September 9, 2007 we welcomed Father Michael Sekela, who relocated with his wife, Matushka Theresa, from Chicago, Illinois, as our permanent priest. His two sons are founding members of our Mission, with his oldest son also being our parish council president. It is a profound blessing to have three generations of our priest's family leading our community!

We continue to seek God's will in all things, and constantly pray that He guide, bless, protect and preserve us in all things.

Thine Own of Thine Own, we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all, and for all... ❖

*Away From Her ... Continued from page 30*

Pinset and Dukakis serves as a great centerpiece. The characters, of Grant and Marianne, are sharply different but the circumstances they find themselves in create a symbiosis that neither can deny. They are lonely and lost in different ways but can't help but be comforted by the other. The action of the film revolves around the conversation in Marianne's kitchen.

Grant must come to terms with his new life and the. Fiona is no longer the same but he longs for her as she used to be. In one particular scene Grant speaks to Fiona in a well-lit hallway in the facility. Through lighting and cinematography we see that Fiona is fading from Grant's life. We see that everything happens but not always for a reason.

The film ends on a solemn note. We may not understand why the events occur but the filmmaker has given us one view of how Alzheimer's disease can rob so much from not only the patient but from those who love them. I recommend this film. ❖

*Still Hope ... Continued from page 32*

This summer we found 15 Russian teens being exploited sexually and financially by the owner of an amusement park who'd lured them into coming over and then took advantage of them in every way. After many calls, only a poor working Russian Priest from Brooklyn who worked among the poor offered what little he had to help. So another religious confession stepped up and bore most of the cost and effort to get these Orthodox kids back to Russia.

I was thinking of a seminar featuring a famous Orthodox writer, held in a non-Orthodox venue as a means to attract non-Orthodox inquirers, and of the local Orthodox Brotherhood who felt offended by the choice of venue... when my street-outreach-phone rang...

Snow was melting on my eyelashes and that might have been why I couldn't read the number and at first, didn't recognize the voice... "Okay, I'll give you your money."

For a minute everything was very still. "Okay, Gus, if you're sure that's how you want to do it. Thank you." He hung up. The snow was stopping and it was time to get back to work.

... Okay, Lord, still hope. ❖

**Jacob's  
well**  
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# One Beggar Telling Another Beggar Where to Find Bread

## Still Hope

By Fr. Stephan Sinari

**I**t was snowing pretty good the day Lizzie's baby died.

Her family had tried their best, but they had their own lives to lead. Mom and Pop were still young and good-looking and lived in different towns. They had that "When's it gonna' be my turn parental philosophy." Mostly bought the kid off once she hit a certain age. Old Grandma was there, comforting the delivery-room nurse.

Nobody knew who to be mad at. The little guy was premature, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a plastic hospital bassinet, wearing a little cap. One eye open, the other closed. There was a lot of crying.

After the prayer I left the delivery room and went to see the Orthodox motel owner where I'd stashed the girl a few hours prior. I had no choice. There was no room at the shelter and the family hadn't wanted her in their space two months prior to delivery.

So when I asked my old friend Gus about the possibility of a partial refund of the week's rent I'd paid in advance... After all, she'd only been in the room a matter of hours before the ambulance arrived... He just looked me in the face and pointed behind his head to the writing on the wall: Absolutely No Refunds.

We looked at each other a minute. "Okay," I said, "You sure that's how you want to do this?" He pointed again.

There was nothing to say.

Outside there was a snow-coated stone square on either side at the bottom of the steps. In the summer they would've set a pot of red geraniums on each.

At that moment in God's time, the squares looked like Lambs on the diskos prior to Liturgy and Pre-Sanctified. So I wrote the IC XC NIKA with the Cross in the middle with my finger in the snow.

Down the road there's a vacant lot and I don't know why, but I stood with my face against the sky and let it snow in my eyes... When it comes to the Gospel, I always like to give the Orthodox first crack:

Once I called an out-of-state Priest and asked for help getting a kid to her home way back there: "Is she Orthodox?" We went back and forth and nowhere.

...Catholic Priest in the same town didn't know me from a can of paint...Bought the ticket out of his own pocket.

Not too long ago a young Orthodox woman died. I'd known her family many years. They helped to build an English language Mission in their area. I took Holy Communion to her regularly during her long illness, tried to comfort her husband, who was not Orthodox, her parents, ethnic Orthodox and pious and good, her children, all Baptized Orthodox.

I knew the local Priest a long time. We'd served many years together, Liturgy, weddings... Nice guy...but his Bishop decided that any Priest outside his jurisdiction, didn't matter who or what, needed to formally document his canonicity and refused permission for me to serve at the funeral. The Priest was embarrassed to have to tell me, he knew we didn't have time to put it together, and the family was already hurt enough... They couldn't understand why...

*Continued on page 31*

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