

Fall 2010

Jacob's we11

*Mutually
Encouraged
by
Each Other's
Faith*



ST. PAUL



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

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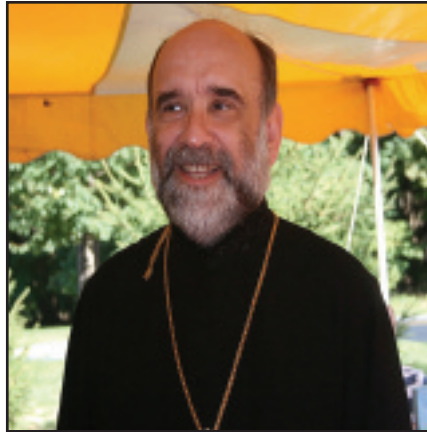
Bishop Michael and Us

by Fr. John Shimchick

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I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. (Romans 1:11-13)

He brings years of administrative experience on various levels, a passion for teaching ignited by deep reflection on the Scriptures, and a life formed by being rooted in love for Christ and His Church that has been challenged by personal tragedy, disciplined by academic study, and nurtured by friendships and courage. Our new Hierarch Michael may be the OCA's youngest bishop in length of service but he has come to offer us his life with all of these long-developed skills and talents. Moreover, as has become already obvious, he desires not just to lead and teach, but to do so by nurturing and forming Christ within us through his own honest and humble example - and by being our pastor.



[Bishop Michael] desires not just to lead and teach, but to do so by nurturing and forming Christ within us through his own honest and humble example

Before his consecration he began this effort by understanding that most clergy, and not just those who would become his own, are desperately in need of care and a shepherd.

So he has organized opportunities for clergy and their families in each Deanery to gather with him informally – no set agenda, but time together and free conversation. His goal, no doubt, will be to offer everyone throughout our Diocese the same kind of possibilities.

As we discussed a plan for this issue it was clear that while he wanted to be involved by writing an article he was concerned that the theme not be “all about him.” So, given his love for the New Testament especially the writings of St Paul, we agreed to allow through his choice of favorite passages the opportunity for St Paul to set the tone. We hope that the reflections devel-

oped on these passages and the questions provided will allow for further discussion within our communities. We have included, with his blessing, an interview prepared last year not as an historical record, but as a review of his life to that point and a valid and still relevant statement of his vision for our Diocese.

We have presented examples of parish events and reviews of materials and welcome a more active sharing of these contributions. For these to be submitted in timely and efficient ways it would be helpful for parishes to assign a community correspondent. The vagueness of our Diocesan life over the

past years has no doubt resulted in a sense of parochial isolation, maybe even an uncertainty over the relevance of connections to a Diocese or even National Church. We hope that a vibrant and regularly produced *Jacob's Well* can be a vehicle for overcoming this isolation and for restoring both communications

and interaction among our parishes. Our Diocesan website: <http://www.nynjoca.org/> is a regularly updated source of information and will include an online copy of this issue.

Finally, Bishop Michael has a well-earned and already demonstrated reputation as a hard worker and having a comprehensive vision. His intent is to love and care for our Diocese, our communities, and for us as laypeople and pastors with our families. Our response only needs to be – an offering of the same love and care for him. Here again let St Paul set the tone for our relationship: that we all indeed might desire to be “mutually encouraged by each other's faith.”

The Antidote of Service and Love for One Another on All Levels:

An Interview with Father Michael Dahulich

[Note: Following his election to the episcopacy but prior to his consecration, Bishop-Elect Michael visited St. Gregory the Theologian Church in Wappingers Falls, New York, where he was interviewed for Jacob's Well by the Very Rev. Archpriest Alexis Vinogradov, pastor. Though this interview took place on December 11, 2009 it is included in this issue to offer our readers a glimpse into the views and perspectives on our Church held by the priest who became bishop.]

Fr Alexis Vinogradov [AV]: Fr Michael, what would you identify as the key factors leading to your acceptance of nomination for bishop of the diocese?

Fr Michael: I never seriously thought it would happen; I was truly content in my priestly life. I had wanted marriage and children. I loved being a parish priest. In my work at St. Tikhon's Seminary I enjoyed the challenge of helping to shape future priests. Both Metropolitan Jonah and Bishop Tikhon encouraged me separately to consider responding to the diocese's need for pastoral oversight and love.

AV: You are courageous, coming on the heels of difficulties experienced both in the diocese and the OCA. At this point there is good work being done to nurture a deeper understanding of hierarchical conciliarity on the basis of the life of the Holy Trinity. Would you comment on this work and challenge?

Fr Michael: The real key is the building of trust. There are several models in the Church's history. The Jerusalem Council in the book of Acts unites the whole Church and truly reflects Trinitarian life. Our own recent time of tensions of power will need the antidote of service and love for one another on all levels. The focus can be neither on me as bishop nor on anyone else except Christ. This will be a time of opportunity to rebuild aspects of Church life with the thinking of architects like Father Alexander Schmemmann who, coming out of the Russian tradition, saw the need to re-establish the Church after the ravages of the Revolution.

AV: Fr Michael, in your own ministry, who would you identify as role models?

Fr Michael: Before studying theology, I was strongly affected by my pastor, who was not formally a theologian, but it was very clear that he loved being a priest. It was shown in his profound love for the people he served. As a seminarian I visited hospitals with him. I once saw him severely criticized, and I was greatly affected by how calmly he accepted this treatment. He simply said that in the end everyone needs the hand of a pastor to hold. I learned from my seminary professors and Bishop John, who ordained me, that most importantly, you have to love the people. Bishop Basil, speaking at a seminary commencement, also underlined that the real job of the bishop is to love his priests and his people. As a teacher of scripture I am personally drawn to Saint John the Evangelist as my hero, and it turns out that my consecration will be on his feast day! I also teach a course on the theology of Saint Paul, and I hold him very dear as well.

AV: In this ministry of love for one another you naturally stress the pastoral dimension of our work, one on one. Could you shed some light on the institutional dimension, our larger witness among churches, to society and other faiths?

Fr Michael: It is essential to witness humbly that our faith is a great gift to the world. As we were being taught in seminary, we learned to witness to other faiths, but today the tragedy is that children have grown up without a church altogether. In a recent survey of youngsters, more five-year-olds recognized the McDonald arches than the Cross of our Lord. Our aim is not primarily to grow numerically-that may happen-but we must witness to Christ by the way we live and what we do. People must be drawn to our example, by how they see our attention and attitude towards the "least" in our society.

AV: Our communities no longer resemble the village church. Our parishes are far flung and our members commute long distances. This affects the life and shape of our communities; they are less organic and



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more intentional. As you prepare seminarians to be pastors do you find there are elements of that preparation that we have neglected?

Fr Michael: We need to develop a pastoral sense for the specific needs of each given local community. There can't be a rigid model. In one place it might be necessary to have classes on a Tuesday night, while another place may have family clusters gathering in parish homes. Our Lord accepted people in their own environment; He went to where they were. The early Christian communities were not identical; Corinth was not Antioch, Ephesus was not Rome. Paul urged us to become all things to all people; we need to understand what that means for us today.

AV: We have noticed that seminary students sometimes embrace Orthodoxy in reaction to a *laissez-faire* diluted Christianity of their origins. They find secure certainties in Orthodoxy, and are drawn to the preservation of externals. How does this square with the challenge of openness and adaptability to culture?

Fr Michael: I believe that our overall Tradition is sufficiently strong. A visitor entering our churches has an immediate grasp of being in an Orthodox church by the general look, the sounds and smells. We need vigilance not to compromise on the essentials, but we need freedom with forms and ethnic variations. Our own uniqueness in America is that we are still formulating what we believe to be a proper expression in America. It is important that we maintain key reference points to the Tradition. In general, I believe we have a good intuition concerning the parameters that we should not cross.

AV: Today, in responding to social and moral issues, the debates within the so-called culture wars, we often resort to simplistic dogmatic assertions, and neglect the pastoral dimension. How do we bring Christ's compassionate love where there is confusion?

Fr Michael: We must ask ourselves what we hope to achieve by what we will say. If our hope is to bring the love of Christ it is important to begin where people are in reality. We cannot flaunt "the right way or the highway!" Christ desires us to dwell in the kingdom, but we all fall short of the measure. In a long era of our Tradition, we enjoyed the luxury of being the dominant faith expression. There was the way of the empire or the wrong way. In a pluralistic culture the assertion of one right way will only turn

people away. If we look to the example of the early Church apologists, we see that they were able to recognize and affirm portions of the truth present in non-Christian cultures, and were thus able to motivate people towards the fuller expression within the true Church. The approach was deeply pastoral, rather than polemical.

AV: Fr Oleksa showed us this by the way Alaskan missionaries were sensitive to local practices, to acknowledge that the "Holy" has visited this place, missionaries were sensitive to this fact.

Fr Michael: The Church in Africa is experiencing this today. It may be appealing to hang on to the past which we received, but our "clients" are not the same.

AV: You spoke of the knowledge of Christ given as opportunity rather than requirement. That seems key in light of our history to require minimal sacramental practices such as yearly confession, which do not induce people to grow spiritually.

Fr Michael: Well, we certainly need guidelines, but they should open to us the opportunities given in Christ. Confession should of course be encouraged. Those of us raised in the Church know well how the chalice of our soul is cleansed through the forgiveness received in confession, but other traditions lack this experience, so it becomes our pastoral challenge to both encourage and open this experience to them. I only worry that our sacramental life does not lose the understanding of godly awe. To this end, we have to be vigilant in discouraging a casual approach to the sacraments.

AV: Father Roman Braga reminds us that in Orthodoxy the rules for monastics are the same as for laypersons. He states affably that the only difference is that the monk "chooses to live in eternity now!" What is our role to light this flame among laypeople?

Fr Michael: We need to move past our habitual concerns for the dichotomy of monk and layman and help ignite in people this desire for the kingdom now. Fr Florovsky spoke of inaugurated eschatology, the kingdom experienced here. We see this in our worship patterned after St. John's vision in Revelation. Carrying this sense into the home, we can teach that the combination of church and home life can be a slice of the kingdom, that we can live in beautiful preparation for when the Kingdom truly comes. We are bombarded by distractions which fore-

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Saint Paul - A Model for Us All

by Bishop Michael

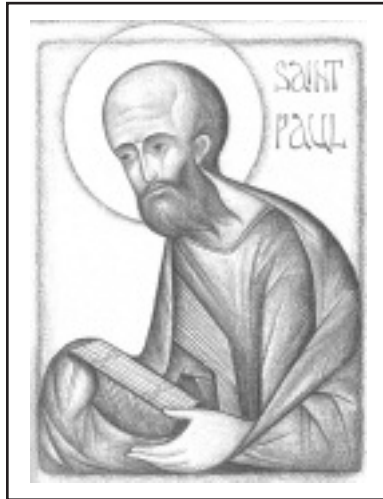
As we embark on a new ecclesiastical year, we do well to recommit ourselves - bishop, clergy and faithful - to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ and to the service of His Holy Church. Someone who epitomized such a constantly renewed commitment was Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, whose faithful preaching and tireless labors brought the message of the Gospel "to the very ends of the world."

For 2,000 years the Church has recognized St. Paul as a model for all of us to follow. When one reflects on the life and teaching, the missionary labors and martyrdom of the Apostle, it is no wonder that St. John Chrysostom wrote of him: "I love all the saints, but I love most the blessed Paul, the chosen vessel, the heavenly trumpet, the friend of the Bridegroom, Christ."

The Acts of the Apostles reveals to us many things about St. Paul. Clearly he was a man of character - zealous and totally committed to Christ. He proudly proclaimed his habit of speaking the full truth without waffling (20:20,27), and refused to be intimidated by the threat of chains and trials in Jerusalem (20:23). He refused to offer a bribe to Felix the Roman governor in exchange for his freedom (24:26), and he demanded his case be heard in Rome by the emperor himself so that he could preach the Gospel in that city (26:32). Such character is the mark of the Christian and is necessary in order for the Church to be truly holy, truly "other" than the world.

Paul was also a man of prayer - in prison or in court, in the synagogue or alone. Right from the start, immediately after he met the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he turned to prayer and fasting as he awaited the Lord's will (9:9). Following his baptism, we find him time and time again in prayer in the synagogues, where he proclaimed that Jesus was indeed the awaited Messiah (9:22). Publically he was a preacher of the Word "in season and out of season." Yet at Philippi, he exited the city gates and found a place for private prayer near a river (16:13). He teaches us by example of the necessity of both liturgical prayer and personal prayer, both public worship and private prayer.

He was a member of the Church - no "lone ranger" but rather the consummate team player. As soon as he was formally initiated into the Faith, he met with the members of the very community that as Saul the Pharisee he had attempted so vigorously to destroy only a short time earlier (9:17,ff.). Throughout his life he attended the gatherings of the People of God - in Damascus, in Iconium, in Corinth, and in Ephesus. He teamed up with Barnabas, then Silas, then Luke, and later Aquila and Priscilla, and finally James and the elders in Jerusalem. He teaches us how to truly be a member of the Body of Christ, and always faithful to His holy Church.



Sketch by Fr Andrew Tregubov

Paul was a witness to the Resurrection - the central message of his faith, preaching and theology. The focus of his ministry, stemming from his first encounter with the Risen Lord on the road to Damascus (9:5), was that Christ was victorious over death and sin. This is the Good News that he had been chosen to proclaim to the children of Israel and the Gentile nations: Jesus is the Messiah! Christ is Risen! And we who live this faith are being saved! ... "But if Christ is not risen, our faith is futile ... and we of all men are the most pitiable" (I Cor. 15:17,19). So too the Resurrected Savior must be the object of our worship, the theme of our sermons, the pattern of our lives, and the inspiration of our ideals.

The Apostle was an agent of conversion and change - repentance from sin and purity of heart. In summarizing his work for the elders at Miletus, Paul referred to the basic acts of repentance before God as fundamental to the faith (Acts 20:21). He repeatedly insisted on "metanoia" - the change of one's mind (26:16,21). And because such transformation took time, Paul stayed for long periods in the various churches - weeks at Thessalonica, a year and a half in Corinth, two years each in Ephesus, in Caesarea, and in Rome - all of this because of Paul's conviction that he was called by God to be an agent of change of heart. The focus of our spiritual life must also be constant repentance for our sins, and encouraging others to return to Christ.

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He was a servant of the community - in the Temple at Pascha, as well as in chains in prison. His work at Derbe was summarized as making many disciples (14:21). He was incredibly successful at enlarging the local churches by preaching and deepening their faith. In returning to towns previously evangelized like Lystra and Iconium, he strengthened the resolve of the new converts, encouraging them to persevere in faith (14:22). Churches were served and strengthened by the addition of the affluent (17:12) and the educated (17:22). His four missionary journeys brought him to many congregations, which he united and whose faith he increased. We too must be servants - standing at the altar or in the soup kitchen, serving others as our Master did, and bringing others to His Church.

Paul was a colleague in suffering - embracing the lowly and persecuted, the sick and the dying with the joyous message of the Gospel. In response to the Good News, he was driven out of Antioch in Pisidia, mocked by the Athenians, stoned at Lystra, beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, and dragged out of the Temple in Jerusalem. What was his response of encouragement for each of those communities? "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (14:22). His was an asceticism of serving and leaving and starting over, trusting that someone else would build upon his work without worrying about it afterwards. Paul encourages us all as we face difficulties: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).

Indeed, the Apostle's shadow falls upon successive generations of bishops, priests and laypersons.

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stall the urgency of such a life. To Zacchaeus, the Lord said, "I am coming to your house!" If Christ came to us, would he recognize our home as a Christian home at any given time? Would ours be a churchly home or would he find the TV blaring, and could He watch what we are watching? The details demonstrate whether we live in a way in which Christ is present among us.

In his closing remarks, Father Michael, asked that the parish communities hold him in their prayers and not to focus on his specific person, reminding us of the psalmist's injunction not to put trust in princes

His contribution in shaping the type of leaders we need in a renewed Church, as presented so clearly in the Acts of the Apostles, remains a valuable measure of effectiveness for all ages.

As Acts ends with the stirring announcement that Paul brought his work to its destined completion, welcoming all who came to him and preaching the kingdom of God to them (28:30), so it must be for those of us who serve Christ in the 21st century. At the very center of the only civilization he knew, the Apostle to the Gentiles taught about and witnessed to our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ openly and unhindered. This is the model every Orthodox Christian must follow. Paul's exhortation for all of us to emulate rings across the centuries: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

Paul's theology is central to the Christian Faith; he is a model for members of the Church to this very day. His teaching about the Lord, that spans more than half the New Testament, can be summed up in one sentence - one that we must not only memorize but also emulate daily: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ... and the life that I live in the flesh I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

This issue of *Jacob's Well* is reverently dedicated to the memory of this great saint - truly a model for us all. As we begin the new liturgical year, let us recommit ourselves to Christ and His Church, asking for his intercession: "Holy Apostle Paul, pray unto God for us!"

or sons of men. His personal goal as bishop is to model leadership as service, to encourage communities to give glory to God both at the Altar in each church as well as at the altar of the soup kitchen.

AV: Thank you, Father Michael. Please be assured that despite our recent difficulties, both clergy and laypeople have a genuine desire to trust our hierarch shepherd, and to rediscover the father who truly loves his flock. We look to you as the sign of our unity, the bearer of catholicity across our large and diverse diocese.

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Keeping Tradition: An Adventure in the Holy Spirit

by Elizabeth Theokritoff

*Hold to the traditions which you were taught by us
(2 Thess 2:15)*

Much has been written about the importance of tradition in Orthodoxy: it can be comprehensively defined as the entire deposit of faith, and that which enables and expresses it. We also know that not every established practice qualifies as Holy Tradition in this sense, so that “holding to the traditions” is rather more complex than replicating what our grandparents taught us. Only by living and growing within the Church, I would suggest, can we learn to distinguish which expressions of our faith are essential. And I would suggest that we receive help in this from three sources: liturgical life, the body of the Church, and the monastic tradition.

Tradition is expressed in worship: indeed two of the most prominent NT references to tradition refer precisely to the Eucharist (1Cor 11:2, 23). This is not to identify the details of the Typicon with the unchanging essence of Holy Tradition; but it does underline the central role of the liturgical cycle (to which we shall return) and the liturgical texts as vehicles whereby that essence is conveyed to us. The content of the services, especially those other than the Divine Liturgy, is the prime means by which all members of the Church can assimilate the Church's theological understanding and, very importantly, its interpretation of Scripture. The Psalms give the Church its language of prayer and worship; the stories and prophecies of the OT shape our understanding of Christ; sacramental services show God's work of creation and salvation encapsulated in this bread, this water, this oil. Such familiarity with the entire sweep of Scripture and its theological meaning is all the more vital in a society so heavily influenced by self-appointed Protestant interpreters of the Bible that even some Orthodox seem willing to grant them a monopoly on the OT! If we are concerned about parish education and better understanding of our faith, surely we need to look carefully at the effects of truncating, reconfiguring, or eliminating the very services that provide our most important educational resource.

**Faithfulness to
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The structure of worship is as important as the texts: the daily, weekly and annual cycles, the rhythm of feasts and fasts, teach us how to interpret time, the seasons and the world about us in accordance with the experience of the Church. Practices associated with the liturgical year such as the blessing of waters or of fruit, green branches in church at Pentecost, and indeed local traditions such as special foods, assist in this process so long as they do not become ends in themselves. Faithfulness to the liturgical year will inevitably create tensions with the annual cycle of secular society, which marches to the loud and insistent beat of a different drum. In some cases, the alien rhythm is obviously disruptive, as with the pre-Christmas consumption frenzy that takes the place of an Advent fast. At other times, its effect is more insidious; thus we see secular holidays such as “Mothers' day” or “Fathers' day” happily embraced into parish life, largely eclipsing any feast (or fast) that they might coincide with.

Certainly, the Church has a long history of co-opting non-Christian festivities and converting them into vehicles of its own tradition. But there is also a risk that the Church's vision of radical newness is replaced with less disruptive ideals such as civic virtue and family values.

Tradition is passed on in community: “Living in the Church” includes not only liturgical life, but also our seemingly quite mundane interactions with other Orthodox Christians, not least those of other parishes and other jurisdictions. This can, of course, happen informally; but events such as a pan-Orthodox Vespers on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, or a lecture series involving parishes of several jurisdictions, send an important message.

Why do such contacts matter? If we really believe that “the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church” (Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848), then we require practice in functioning as part of that body: not simply as individual believers, or indeed groups united by ethnic or cultural ties. In our contacts with other Orthodox, we

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will on occasion come across local customs that have been elevated to the status of Holy Tradition and ill-advised borrowings from the ambient culture. These very imperfections should challenge us: are there similar distortions of tradition in my own understanding, in my home parish or diocese, to which familiarity has blinded me? And then we also encounter legitimate customs, practices and emphases that are simply unfamiliar to us; and the varied ways in which Orthodoxy is expressed can itself allow the commonalities - that which truly belongs to the tradition of the Church - to shine out more clearly. The rediscovery of a feast, a service, a saint or a ministry that is largely ignored in our home parish - this can open our eyes to the richness of the Orthodox tradition to which we are all heirs.

Again, it is through our fellow Orthodox that we touch the more mysterious aspect of tradition as "the witness of the Spirit" (Florovsky). The twentieth century has seen some remarkable instances of this witness: in the flowering of holiness within Churches under persecution; the creative re-expression of Orthodox tradition that began with the Russian emigration and is still spreading round the Orthodox world; the truly miraculous revival on Mount Athos at a time when its monastic tradition seemed doomed to extinction... To read about these things is valuable. But to learn from those who have experienced these movements at first hand, whose lives have been touched and changed by them - that is to know the mysterious dynamism of the tradition of the Church.

Finally, a vital guardian of tradition is monasticism: and "holding to the tradition" is made easier if we have links to one or more monasteries which we visit periodically. Here we could learn from the Greeks, who have been long accustomed to seeing monasteries as an integral part of local church life. Monasteries are repositories of tradition in some very obvious ways, with their full liturgical life, daily commemoration of the Saints and, in some cases, strong living tradition from recent spiritual fathers or mothers. But still more basically, the monastery is a territory where every aspect of living is informed by the mind of the Church. Monastic life "connects the dots" of the traditions we have been taught. In particular, it shows how the ascetic tradition fits into the picture: not as a set of arbitrary rules which we keep mechanically, but as a proven regime of growth and healing, transforming what we have received in the Church into what we are.

We are blessed to have a number of monasteries relatively close, including St Tikhon's and Holy Protection in Pennsylvania and Holy Myrrhbearers in New York state. Each monastery is different; not all are outwardly "traditional" to the same degree. But their existence and vitality, and the extent to which they are embraced by the Orthodox community, testify to the power of the Church's tradition to be the foundation of a total way of living, even amidst a society with very different values and aspirations. And the diversity among monastic communities reminds us that faithfulness to tradition does not mean only following well-trodden paths; it is ultimately an adventure in which our only guide is the Spirit of Truth.

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss some examples of how liturgical texts, or the choice of scriptural readings, present an interpretation of Scripture (especially the OT). How might the instructive aspect of services such as Vespers be better utilized?
2. How far should secular holidays affect the rhythm of our life as Christians? Does our parish have the best balance between embracing, "baptizing" and ignoring them?
3. What can we learn from Orthodox of other jurisdictions/cultural backgrounds? Can you think of aspects of church Tradition that seems to be more faithfully lived out in Orthodox communities other than our own?
4. Have you ever encountered people whom you regard as living bearers of Tradition? Explain!
5. "Monastic life 'connects the dots' of the traditions we have been taught, and particularly the ascetic tradition": based on your own experience, do you agree? How can such connections be made more accessible in parish life?

*(Elizabeth Theokritoff is an independent scholar and translator; co-editor of **The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology** and author of **Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology**. She belongs to Holy Trinity parish in Randolph, NJ.)*

One Bread, One Body

by Father Ken James Stavrevsky

The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

I will never forget the day, or the lesson I (a ten year old boy) learned that day, when my born-and-raised-in-the-old-country grandmother, Dorothy, revealed an insight into liturgical theology that rivaled those precious times in class with Father Alexander Schmemmann (of blessed memory along with my grandmother). As was her sacred custom, she had prepared the kitchen area for some serious bread-making: proshpora, the bread of "the Church," specifically. Two kitchen tables were placed edge-to-edge, creating the necessary mixing and kneading surface for that which was to take place. Large bowls for mixing and bags of flour were placed precisely in the proper location at table's edge; fresh, clean white towels were neatly folded, ready to cover the dough during proofing. The labor of love she embarked upon began early on a Saturday morning, and seemed to flow through the early afternoon until the bread was "done" and ready to be wrapped ... carefully, lovingly wrapped ... for the next day's Liturgy or, in the case of "surplus loaves," prepared for a rest in the freezer awaiting upcoming services. Once the mixing, proofing, kneading, forming and baking had begun, there was a aura of sanctity and intense purpose encompassing that humble kitchen. It was somehow, inexplicitly, "a different place" than the room where we ate our meals, shared stories of the day, and joked around the table. Something was different, but in a way that slips away when words are applied in description.

What I clearly remember is this: you didn't mess around with Grandma when she was making the "Church bread!" Everything about her motions, facial expressions, and demeanor silently said: "Something really important is going on here." So, in this context, came the day of my lesson. It was late on a Saturday afternoon. The "Church bread" had been removed from the oven, fully baked, golden, with that marvelous and unmistakable fragrance of completeness filling the kitchen. There were four or six loaves, alas my memory fades, of "Church bread" out for cooling, each in the large-loaf "Greek" style (forgive me, Gram, I should say "Macedonian Style") with the traditional seal -- IC/XC/NL/KA -- carefully pressed and embossed on the top. She was ready to wrap the

now-cooled loaves and I, tired and sweaty from a day of playing football in the backyard with neighborhood friends, entered the kitchen to get a drink of water. As she stood at the counter near the refrigerator with appropriate wrapping material in hand, she said: "Kenny, give me a loaf of bread to wrap." That is when it happened. The unthinkable. The scandalous. The blasphemous event which resides in my memory with an imprint as vibrant as the moment that has just passed. I grabbed a loaf of bread -- "Church bread" -- and, since I was standing the short distance of about 15 feet away from my grandmother and since I was, after all, kind of tired and bored by the request of any cooperation in this adult enterprise, I tossed (actually, it was more of a baseball-style throw) the "Church bread" toward her. I don't know if it was her shock, her failing eyesight, or just a lack of coordination that resulted in her mishandling of the throw and the result: the "Church bread" fell to the kitchen floor.

The silence ... the mood ... the moment ... was breathtaking, even to the sensibilities of a ten-year-old boy. She gave me a look, the kind everyone who had a Baba has seen on occasion, and motioned with her finger that I was to draw near. "Get on your knees," she said. Without a second thought, since the first one was intimidating enough, I did as I was instructed. There I was, on my knees in front of the fallen "Church bread." Softly but sternly, she said, "Kiss the bread!" Bowing from the waist, I did so. "This bread is a gift from God," she said, "don't ever do that again." Stretching out my hands, I carefully -- reverently -- picked up the bread, rose to my feet, and handed it to her. She kissed me, and the anger dissipated in a warm and loving hug. The next day, Sunday, I stood in the sanctuary wearing my server's robe as Father John Kozak (of blessed memory) consecrated the "Church bread" upon the altar: "Take! Eat! This is my Body which is broken for you ..." The words pierced my heart as I pondered the labor of love and the expression of love -- the gift -- that was a reality of grace in that bread. I've rarely approached the chalice, received the Body of Christ, since that day without a profound sense of gratitude -- truly, "holy things for the holy."

Four decades later, I attempted to express something, maybe gratitude, by way of a poem. It is my favorite, and a way for me to share with you a tribute to my beloved grandmother:

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My Baba's Present

Special Saturdays you put on
a discolored stole speckled by
snippets of doughflesh fleeting
through fingers fluttering
above your homely altar

I played acolyte, slapdash
aching for the churchyard
where boys scheme blitzes,
and conspire rebelliousness
too secret for elder's knowing

You held me in your wrinkles
kneading age-old hymns and
counting time; birthing memories
savored in incense-bearing crust
and crumbs consumed solemnly

How I welcomed the benediction!
Out the door, returning past late,
bed-bound waiting for your kiss
on a smile too tired to laugh.
A day not totally wasted

Perhaps children perceive, in a profoundly simple and satisfied way, more readily than adults the utter mystery -- of mixture and unity -- revealed in the sight, smell, and savor of freshly baked bread. The flour, water, and yeast (for some, a pinch of salt) -- by mixing, in kneading, and through proofing and fashioning -- are transformed into the dough that will, by oven's warmth, be retrieved as a loaf of bread. The imagery and symbolism of bread found in the Scriptures and manifested in the Liturgy is incredible, and it is sad that everyone in a parish does not experience the prothesis (or, proskomedia) during which the bread and wine are "made ready" for the Eucharistic celebration, later to be carried in holy procession to the altar of consecration, consummated in the mystery of the drawing near of the people of God: "Lo, this has touched your lips, it shall take away your iniquities, and cleanse your sins."

As we rejoice in the recent consecration and installation of His Grace, +Michael as Bishop of New

York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, we would do well to consider the "Church bread." Before it is given and received sacramentally as truly the Body of Christ, it must be carefully prepared. The ingredients -- flour, water, yeast -- must be "good" and worthy of the effort and purpose. Coarse flour may need to be sifted, the imperfections and hardness removed. Likewise, clean, clear water and active ("living") yeast are essential. The synergy of ingredients and prosphora-maker's skill will be tested (by fire, so to speak) in the oven.

I perceive, personally and in observation of my parish and Deanery, there is a wonderful sense of "awakening" and "anticipation" as Bishop Michael begins his archpastoral leadership as our diocesan hierarch. That is to be expected, I suppose, and our prayers for the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon him and all of us ("For we, though many, are one bread and one body") give us great hope for the good-estate of Christ's Holy Church and "good things to come." But in the midst of joy, we -- incarnations, one and all, of the "Church bread" -- must pay heed and dedicate ourselves and one another to meeting the challenges of the present, some of which remain as remnants of our past. We certainly fall into sin by clinging to disappointments, arguments, and hurts of days gone by. But we must be honest, without falling prey to name-calling or blame-setting. It should come as no surprise to any of us that our Diocese has been through a lengthy period of archpastoral dysfunction. It is also true that the inevitable result has been a disturbance toward ecclesial dysfunction in our parishes and, if I may be so bold to say, in all of us. There are many and varied reasons for this, all of them understandable given human frailty and finitude. The work at hand must be the recognition of the dysfunction, confession of complicity, forgiveness and a restoration to "wholeness."

In its Final Report of August 17, 2009, the Diocesan Search Committee (whose work ultimately culminated in the nomination of Father Michael Dahulich at the Extraordinary Diocesan Assembly on August 31, 2009) identified four areas of concern. These concerns, thoughtfully raised and prescient, may be seen as -- with apology to those who dislike stretched metaphors -- chaff in need of sifting from the flour. The issues identified were: Clericalism, [the abrogation of] Responsibility, Parochialism, and [the lack of] Conciliarity. I will not attempt to recreate here the quite excellent description and discussion of

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Toward Transfiguration

by Rebecca Matovic

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Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

How does this passage from Romans pertain to the ministry and life of our Diocese as we welcome our newly consecrated bishop?

Our priest once told a story at the end of Vespers. A man, an illiterate man, wanted to become a monk and went to a monastery. The igumen told him that he would need to learn the psalter by heart and set him the task of learning the first half of the first verse of the first psalm, telling him to come back in a week. In a week, the man returned, and the igumen asked if he was ready for the second half of the verse. The man replied, "No, this is enough," and spent the rest of his life contemplating that one half verse (hint: we sing it every Saturday night).

The first half of this verse from Romans is a bit like that for me - there is much to contemplate just in the contrast between conforming and transforming. Conforming means to take what we are and shape it to fit predetermined patterns and agendas. At this moment in our Diocesan life, we are beset by agendas. Perhaps more than any other Diocese in the OCA, New York and New Jersey is in some ways unformed. We have been without a bishop for several years. In the past, as the Metropolitan see, the needs of the diocese were often subsumed by the concerns of the national church. The OCA as a whole has come through a tumultuous time, and many in our diocese were drawn into the fray. Probably each priest and each layperson has some idiosyncratic vision of what our diocese is and what it should become. Even the most well intentioned agenda, however, is an exercise in conforming - imposing plans and priorities that are ultimately worldly, even when dressed up in churchliness.

But if we are not to conform, what is this transformation that we are called to? Part of the answer can be found in the word 'transform' itself. Reading Facebook one day (the Lord works in very mysterious ways), I came across a discussion of this same passage by Bishop Savas of the Greek Archdiocese. One commentator pointed out that the word translated here as 'transform' is the same as the word used for the Transfiguration - metamorphosis. Transfiguration -

that's a profound and challenging word. To be transfigured is to take who and what we truly are and allow ourselves to be filled and transformed by God. It is to be bathed in the uncreated light of Tabor. This is no garden-variety transformation.

A little more clarity comes from reviewing where the passage falls in Romans. It introduces a chapter dealing with service and order in the Church. The transformation urged is critical to how we function together as the Church. Not only must we be transfigured individually, but how we come together as the Church must also be transfigured. We cannot allow church to be simply something institutional that we do together, like the other activities that keep us busy or give us a sense of identity -- a Kiwanis with icons that conforms to the world's ideas of religion. We as Church are called to something far more personal and transformational.

Having put off writing this long enough to make the editor nervous, two events on the weekend of our new bishop's consecration, a concert and a brief interaction with Bishop Michael, gave me some hint, glimpsed darkly in a mirror, of the transfiguration to which this passage calls us.

On May 8th, at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City, Nicholas Reeves presented a concert of religious choral works composed during the communist era. The concert was sung by the Canticum Novum Singers, and, between selections, two fine scholars, Katya Ossorgin and Dr. Natalie Zelensky, explained the context within which the works were composed. The men who composed these pieces gained no worldly glory or recognition. They put their careers and their livelihood in danger when they overtly expressed belief - and yet the power of the divine could not be denied. They put aside conformity to the world and composed music of transcendent, heart breaking, soul nourishing beauty. Through their work, I fleetingly understood -- this is transfiguration.

The next morning, at the very end of the Divine Liturgy and Installation of the new bishop at the Diocesan Cathedral on 2nd Street, something helped me understand what this passage means for us. The line to greet the new bishop was long and slow. Many people know him well, and he had a personal word for

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each. I don't know him personally, but was struck by our brief interaction. When my daughter approached, he placed his panagia on her head and blessed her in a gentle and loving way. When I asked his blessing, he said, "Please pray for me." Simple words, but spoken with humility and humanity. There was nothing formal or distant in his voice - he meant it.

No matter how right this or that opinion may be on a particular issue, in the end all the agendas are mere role-playing and artificiality, a failure to see the image of Christ in one another. Transformation, metamorphosis, transfiguration -- the light seen on Mount Tabor cannot be reduced to earthly cares. Standing on his new cathedra, at the end of a long liturgy, at the end of a long weekend, Bp. Michael's simple "pray for me" points the way to what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Yes, Vladyka, I will pray for you. Pray also for me, and for us all.

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these issues in the Search Committee's Report. I encourage interested readers to view and read a copy of the report at:

http://nynjoca.org/news_090817_1.html

In the midst of our present joy, hope, and expectations, it is undeniable that there is work -- "heavy lifting" -- to be done. Bishop Michael likes to say, "It's not about me, it's about Christ ... and it's about the parishes." Truth be told, a bishop -- no matter how greatly Axios-ed -- is neither independent of or apart from the priests, deacons, and faithful of his diocese. In a unity of love in Christ, the bishop, priests, deacons, and faithful are called to be, by God's grace, the "Church bread." All of us are accountable to God and one another. There will be challenges ahead. We will, through sin, fall short of the glory of God. When that inevitably occurs, I pray we will remain fervent in faith, steadfast in love, gracious in forgiveness, and sincere in repentance. We should be willing, when the situation calls for it, to follow the wise advice of a faithful Baba: "Get on your knees and kiss the bread ... it is a gift from God."

Questions for Discussion

1. Sometimes the home, the place we live, is referred to as "a little Church." Re-read the poem "My Baba's Present." Are there connecting points between

Questions for Discussion

1. Share examples of moments or experiences that helped you glimpse what it means to be transfigured, to be transformed by renewal of your mind.
2. What are your priorities and concerns for your own parish and for the Diocese? How do these priorities measure up in light of this verse?
3. Reading the rest Romans chapter 12, what would be different in our parishes and in our Diocese if our life in the Church were transformed in accordance with this verse?

Rebecca Matovic is a parishioner at St. Mary Magdalen Orthodox Church in New York City. She lives in Astoria with her husband and two children and is a partner in an advertising and public relations firm.

Church and home? What about your home?

2. Have you ever made prosphora (Church bread) for the Divine Liturgy? If so, what was the experience like? If not, would you like to do it sometime? Where would you start?
3. In the King James translation of the Bible, the word "bread" appears 330 times (75 times in the New Testament). Can you think of, or find, some of these references? What do they mean?
4. When Baba said, "Kiss the bread," what did she imply?
5. Why does the priest offer commemorations (for the Bishop, civil authorities, the living and the departed) aloud during the Great Entrance, when the bread and wine are brought to be offered on the altar? If the bread is an offering, does it symbolize something beyond itself?

*Father Ken James Stavrevsky is rector of Saint John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Rochester NY. He is appointed to the Diocesan Council of Presbyters, and serves as Director of Communications for the Diocese and Secretary for the New York State Deanery. His poetry has been published in **The Potomac Review** and **Connections**.*

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Reflections on the Consecration of St Mary Magdalen Church

by Sarah Loft

[Note: St Mary Magdalen Church, located at 70 West 107th Street in Manhattan, was consecrated on the Sunday of the Cross, March 7, 2010 by Metropolitan Jonah and assisted by rector, Fr Yakov Ryklin and other clergy. The choir was led by Hilary Baboukis and Christopher Minarich.]

At Matins in the weeks leading up to the beginning of Great Lent, we sing Israel's lament (Psalm 136) that begins "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion" followed by "Alleluia" after every verse. (One of those verses "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" has banged around in my head year 'round for years on end, like an advertising jingle I can't un-think.) Then we begin our season of repentance with a Sunday commemorating the "Triumph" of Orthodoxy. These are odd juxtapositions.

The Consecration was a truly special occasion... I was caught up in the excitement, snapping pictures, and satisfying my liturgical curiosity-- I had never witnessed the washing and anointing of an altar. I was also feeling the 'triumph' represented by our urban church and even had the fleeting thought "We should have been doing this on the first Sunday of Lent, not the Sunday of the Cross." This is, after all, a "little jewel" of a church as Metropolitan Jonah described it in his homily, filled with Xenia Pokrovsky's stunning iconography. We were far from that student pub up two long winding stairs at Union Theological Seminary where we were meeting nearly twenty-five years ago. The seminarian (Yakov Ryklin) who had been ordained a deacon in that bar is now our third rector. A former choir conductor (same bar) is now our Metropolitan, the bishop who consecrated our altar. It would have been pretty chaotic, in real life, but my imagination had a couple of extra choirs singing while everything else was going on that day. One of them repeated "This is the day the Lord has made" continuously, over and over.

The Consecration of St. Mary Magdalen Church was a long time in the making-- even longer than the twenty-five years since the student pub days. Fr Stephen Plumlee wrote to tell me about the plan to organize an English language parish in Manhattan and when I moved back to the City in 1976, the group was meeting at Christ the Savior Church. Matushka Lois Plumlee taught special education in Yonkers for years, in effect providing us with a missionary priest. (Lois was the first in a parade of people who came to mind during the Consecration service.) In 1985, the English language group at Christ the Savior Church morphed into the new St Mary Magdalen Mission led by Fr. Stephen Morris. One of our members, Alison Morgan, a student at Union Theological Seminary, suggested our new meeting place-- then left us for a monastery during our first year. Over the next twenty plus years, we held services, received converts, sent young people to seminary, organized student events at Columbia University, held lecture series and iconography classes, engaged in a variety of social outreach projects, and slowly raised money for a building fund. Fr. Yakov Ryklin's creative deal making turned that fund first into a vacant lot in Washington Heights and then into the beautiful church space in a new building on 107 Street.

So many people came to mind during the Consecration service-- people who worked to keep our parish going, people who became Orthodox, people who went on to become priests, missionaries, iconographers, nuns, and at least one priest's wife... and also people who have died and people who have moved away. I felt a lingering sadness that so very few of us present at the beginning of this journey were here to see this special service. I thought of people who left us in disappointment, with lost faith or anger or hurt feelings. I thought of spiritual journeys gone awry, people who left the church, people wounded in

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Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day

In an annual observation that provides grieving parents and family members an opportunity to pray, members of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (East Meadow NY) hosted a prayer service on Friday, October 15, for families on Long Island that have experienced a pregnancy loss or infant death.

“Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day” is observed in the United States and Canada annually on October 15. On October 15, families all over the world light candles at 7:00 p.m. in their own time zones in honor of babies that have died in the womb or within the first few years of life. As this International Wave of Light spread around the globe, we at Holy Trinity had the opportunity to join with others who grieve, remember, and hope for reunion in the world to come.

The service, which was open to the public, included prayers for a blessed repose for the infants who have died and peace for their families. “The prayers we offered are meant to provide solace for those who have been affected by the tragedy of losing a child,” said Father Martin Kraus, the parish rector. “We want people to know that the Church is a place of hope, love, and comfort in their time of sorrow and need.”

The Orthodox Church proclaims that life is precious. Prayers were offered for children who have died at any stage of development (miscar-

riage, stillbirth, SIDS, disease, abortion, accident, and any other cause or tragedy). “The grief of those who are affected by the loss of a child is real, no matter the child’s age or development,” Father Kraus said, adding, “We pray for the parents and families as well as the children since God is merciful, and these ‘Innocents’ have a place before God in heaven.”

Many Orthodox parents from around the United States emailed prayer requests and offered gratitude for the service. A couple who had a baby still-born in 1960 said that they finally were able to have some closure. Another mom emailed from Virginia, “Thank you from the bottom of my heart for organizing this. Although I can’t be there, I am thankful for this recognition of the continuing need for healing of those who suffered the loss of a child. God bless your work.”

Two other Orthodox churches held “Wave of Light” services with candles and prayers to commemorate the infants who have died. St Juvenaly Mission in Kailua-Kona, HI lit over 93 hand-made votive candles!

For more resources on pregnancy loss and other fertility challenges including infertility and post abortion healing, go to:

<http://holytrinityeastmeadow.org/pregnancyloss.html>

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various ways--- and the juxtaposition with all the good memories reminded me that we are still in a "foreign land" where what should be our place of comfort and strength can become a place of hurt and abandonment.

My second imaginary choir was singing Psalm 136 throughout the service. And it seemed to me that the Sunday of the Cross was the right day for this service after all. We are still a 'work in progress' as we pray, repent, forgive,

cook church dinners, paint icons, sing services, consecrate the altar... This is how we sing the Lord's song in the foreign land of this world. We "build the walls of Jerusalem" in Babylon and the joy in that is so great, "Alleluia," punctuates every statement.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made.

Feed My Lambs

by Matushka Anastasia Karlgut
SS. Peter and Paul Church, Endicott, NY

It is difficult to write a report on outreach activities of any parish, for the fear of coming across as bragging, and this is not my intent. If anything, it is done in obedience to our Bishop, who required it, and with prayer that it will be helpful to others, who might want to initiate or expand their own outreach ministries and programs, in the parishes of our diocese.

In order to make this article somewhat inspirational I want to share a true story, which I believe sets the right perspective on outreach ministry.

It happened one June evening - The kids and I just sat down to eat dinner. The girls insisted on lighting some candles, the little flames happily danced around in the breeze, making our kitchen cozy and warm. There was an air of growing anticipation because this was the last week of school. The kids excitedly interrupted each other as they discussed summer plans. I watched this usual meal-time chaos with the sense of tranquility and peace.

Our newly adopted children were adjusting very well to their new life in US. And our biological children were starting to accept the four new additions to the family. As for me, I considered myself beyond fortunate to be able to stay home and guide this delicate process.

We have been blessed with a wonderful church family, great friends and a comfortable home. True, we weren't rich, but we lacked nothing, either. Life was good!

Over the loud chatter I heard the doorbell. The younger children jumped up from the table and ran to the door, laughing and pushing each other out of the way, to see who could get there first. The front door swung open and almost immediately it was forcefully shut with the loud bang. The runaways piled back into the kitchen looking taken aback and scared. As I got up, I scolded them for being rude and opened the door.

There he stood - his hair greasy and matted, his face dirty and unshaven. He wore an oversized shirt and a pair of stained jeans. But he spoke in a quiet and gentle voice that didn't match his general appearance. He simply said: "Ma'am, could you please give me some food?" I left him standing on our front porch

and ran back into the kitchen. There I rummaged through my cupboards and half-heartedly gathered some food. I was annoyed at the intruder who interrupted our peaceful meal, and I wanted him gone.

As I was putting the food into plastic bags, a hardly audible voice within me said: "You should ask him what food he likes." But I didn't. I quickly handed him the bags and turned to go. He said: "God Bless you," and left.

He came again, looking more disheveled than the first time, and there was a strong stench coming from his direction. His skin was sunken and tight against his cheekbones. This time around, I took more care in preparing his food packages. I put in there things that I would have enjoyed eating myself. He received the food with immense gratitude, a big smile spread over his face. As he was about to go, a little voice inside me said: "Ask him if he needs any clean clothes?" But I didn't.

By now school was out and with this came the glorious freedom of summer. The children were spending most of the time outside. Our playground in the backyard was constantly transformed from a medieval castle attacked by fierce dragons, to a ship braving the storms at sea. Truly, a child's imagination is boundless! As the boys were building roads in the sandbox and the girls were having a pretend picnic for their dolls, one of them yelled: "Mommy, Mommy, the poor man is back!" I was glad that gone was the original apprehension and fear. I gathered the usual packages and handed them over. He just stood there reluctant to leave. Then, very shyly he asked: "Ma'am, I have a great favor to ask. Could you please give me a Bible?" I led him into my husband's office, where one entire shelf was dedicated to prayer books and Bibles. "Which one do you want?" I asked. He picked out a King James Version, written in a larger print. Then he turned to go. The little voice nagged: "Ask him if there is anything else you could do for him?" - But I didn't.

And then came the rains. That year it rained for two weeks straight. The river looked angry and swollen. Every time the kids and I drove over the bridge, we watched the rising waters. The river went over the banks and started to flood the surrounding areas.

Towards the end of the second week our visitor came again. His clothes were damp and caked with mud. I led him straight into the kitchen, where I got his food packages together. As I was putting spaghetti into one of the bags it dawned on me to ask: "Do you have a pot to boil some pasta?" He did not answer for a very long time. I looked up and saw his pained expression, his eyes pierced me right through. He took a very deep breath and very quietly said: "Ma'am, I have no pot or stove or roof over my head. I live under the Bridge." I was speechless as it took me a while to process these words. This time, a very bold strong voice from within said: "Invite him over for dinner, offer him to take a shower, and give him some clean clothes. Then help him get into a homeless shelter." But - I didn't.

He turned to go and with the smile on his face and said: "By the way, my name is Caleb." He was gone before I came out of my trance. I never saw him again.

As I lay in bed that night, listening to the rain pounding on the roof, I thought about Caleb. I was ashamed of my inability to reach out and make a real difference. I was too busy and wrapped up in my own life to go an extra mile. I neglected to do the most important thing of all - see Christ in this destitute man, and live out the Gospel parable of Great Judgment (Mt. 25). My thoughts turned to all poor, hungry, and homeless. How was it not to have a roof over your head and be at the mercy of elements? How was it to wake up each morning feeling hungry and not knowing where to get your next meal? How was it to look into the face of your dying child because you were not able to provide? And finally, how was it to be numb with grief at the sight of a premature death? A death quite easily prevented by extension of human kindness and generosity?

Almost two years have gone by since I first met Caleb. He taught me many valuable lessons that I will never forget. Since then our parish has opened a food pantry. For people who know hunger intimately, our food pantry is a lifeline.

One of the biggest misconceptions is that this unfortunate section of the population finds themselves in this sad predicament because of their own fault. People blame bad decisions, laziness, and the welfare environment as being part of this problem. This might be partly true, but I will let God be the judge of that. After all, Christ didn't put any conditions on taking care of the needy. He simply said - feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, dress the naked.

We may not be able to fix world suffering single-handedly, but we could reach out to the people within our reach. Dramatic change is accumulation of multiple acts of human kindness.

As a parish, we prepare and distribute Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter food baskets, give away over 1,500 lbs of potatoes and apples to the needy in the community, we have cooked, deboned, distributed, and served over ton and a half (3,000 lbs) of turkeys between Thanksgiving and

Christmas. In cooperation with the local American Legion we served over 3,000 dinners on Thanksgiving Day. We collect clothes for the children of St. Tikhon's Seminary students and gift cards for the kids, for Christmas. Our Sunday School collected funds for Haiti and made hundreds of care packages for our troops.

Our little food pantry, through the tireless efforts of Fr. Tim Holowatch, Fr. Deacon John Bohush, R Club Chapter, numerous volunteers, and government agencies contacts, distributes between \$75,000 and \$100,000 a year, in foods for the needy in surrounding area. All this takes a lot of work and puts a lot of strain on the parish. And we are grateful to our parish council and its president Norm Cross for sharing this vision of outreach and ministry, and learning to be Christians in deeds as well as in words.

Christ commanded us to "love one another as He has loved us first". We strive to live this commandment in our daily lives as a parish family.

I still think of Caleb - Was it Him?



*Bishop Michael, a volunteer,
and Fr Timothy Holowatch*

Raising the Roof in Pearl River, NY

The Very Reverend Igumen Joseph, Rector of Holy Transfiguration Church, Pearl River, NY, is happy to announce that a new roof has finally been constructed over the one hundred fifty year plus church building and attached parish hall. Deteriorating black asphalt shingles were blowing off the building with each wind and rainstorm and the roof was becoming more and more compromised threatening the very structure itself.

Two layers of shingles, where they still existed, were removed down to the original wood. Cedar shakes, on the older part of the building, were replaced with new plywood sheathing as well as a few other places where the wood planks had rotted. The new roof is a product of Timberline and is guaranteed for thirty years.

Expenses were kept to a minimum by contracting a parishioner to do the work. Donations from parishioners, friends of the parish, and some sister parishes of the New Jersey Deanery were graciously accepted by the small and financially struggling community to underwrite the cost of the project.

Holy Transfiguration Church, in the Nauraushaun area of Pearl River, NY in upstate

Rockland County, was originally built to serve a Unitarian congregation. Later, the building was purchased by Presbyterians who eventually moved down the road to a much larger building constructed to serve their growing needs. The parish of Holy Transfiguration; originally worshipping in the hall of the Clarkstown Fire House when it was organized in 1968 then, later, worshipping in the library of the Rockland Psychiatric Center, finally purchased the present temple where it is today. Over the years, extensive renovation and decoration has been done to enhance the church as an Orthodox Christian place of worship.

Vigil or Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy for Sundays, Great Feasts and many major feasts are regularly served in addition to other occasional services. Over the past three years an annual tradition of serving the [unabridged] Mystery of Holy Unction, with seven priests, has become a feature of the schedule of services during the Great Fast enjoyed by clergy and parishioners invited from the northern parts of the deanery. The schedule of services and pictures are available on the parish website:

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

New Cupolas at the Church of the Mother of God

Mays Landing, New Jersey



Saint Gregory's Expanding!

Wappingers Falls, NY

In the midst of global economic and political uncertainty, our neighbors might wonder if we have access to “special knowledge”-we're expanding our parish facilities! Mind you, the planning process began over four years ago when regular folk were mortgaging America's future down the drain, riding high on the illusion that houses can keep flipping on a market that would reward gamblers with dividends at each subsequent sale. Yesterday's delusions are recorded in the debris and discontent all around. But faith and the things of God are not mired in this human folly. Faith and the things of God are what lift us high above the mire. We know that Liturgy Sunday after Sunday, feast after feast, fast after fast, are not just a doing of religious stuff, but are in fact the nourishment that keeps a Christian parish intact and whole despite the chaos and uncertainty.

There is a treasure in our parish home, hard won by the fidelity of founders from 1964, most of whom have gathered diligently at the altar of Christ for forty six years and are still here! They built the present church in 1970, and remain involved in expanding this same church and in building a fellowship hall today. Our treasure is not in gold, it is certainly not the easiest time to raise money - that reality strikes us as it does any community. Our treasure is rather in the unspoken knowledge that this church, this community, is a gift for most of us. This is where God gathers us to bring us joy and salvation.

**Our treasure is
rather in the
unspoken knowledge
that this church,
this community,
is a gift
for most of us.**

Our decision to expand has little to do with statistics and demographics-who today can predict any trends? Who knew that today America would be building only a third of the homes it built in any previous year? We don't poll or watch trends. We believe. And after so many years we believe that it is “worth” coming here to dine at the Lord's Table on his Body freely given for Life. We need more room for new folks and a bit more elbow room for those already here, and more space to rejoice in fellowship afterward for the love offered and received. And we also believe that others will keep coming as, indeed, they do, for God keeps sending them.

To manage the work ahead we divided the project into three phases: a new bright and spacious fellowship Hall connected to and tripling our current space; and two distinct transepts (wings) to expand the Nave and provide new rooms below. At this writing we are about to build Phase One, and invite all readers to visit us in the beautiful Hudson Valley. In true Hobbit style we stay well-hidden and challenge you to find us, but beware, you won't want to leave! Naturally, we welcome the gifts and support of all who know us, but mainly we ask you to hold us in your hearts.



Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY

by Fr. Timothy Holowatch, Dn. John Bohush, & Matthew Binkewicz

The evangelical command of our Lord is crystal clear. Appearing to His Disciples after His Glorious Resurrection from the dead, (as Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew describes the events which took place on that mountain top in Galilee), Christ, resplendent in glory proclaims, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Following the vision of Bishop Michael, we began as a mission parish composed of persons who understand our identity as sons and daughters of the living God through our belonging to Jesus Christ in baptism. In a very short period of time, the parish has reached out to many in the community offering a place to worship, an opportunity to participate in the liturgical life of the Church, and to enjoy fellowship with other Orthodox Christians.

Our congregation is truly a Pan-Orthodox group with roots in the Greek, Russian, Carpatho-Russian, Arab, and Ukrainian traditions. We also have several families that are converts from other faith traditions. This mix works very well as all of them have been searching for an English speaking church in the Ithaca/Lansing area.

Outreach into the community has been very positive. The parish has re-established the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) at Cornell and has met with the staff of the Cornell United Religious Works. A group of Cornell students are now attending Sunday Divine Liturgy.

As many involved in mission work know, getting the word out to the community is always a challenge. Our church has run ads in *The Cornell Daily Bulletin* (The Welcome Back Issue) and in *The Ithaca Journal*, the daily newspaper in Tompkins County. One couple, Methodist by

background, saw the ad in *The Ithaca Journal* and has been attending regularly. They are interested in becoming Orthodox, and are attending an Introduction to Orthodoxy Class held every Saturday.

In addition, the parish has an ad in *The Lansing Star*, an online newspaper. The editor has donated the first year of the ad as a gift. Recently, the parish extended its reach to nearby Cortland County with an ad in *The Cortland Standard*. We hope to offer Orthodox Christians in that region a chance to worship with us as well.

None of this could have happened without the vision, blessing, and the support from His Grace Bishop MICHAEL, along with Frs. Tim Holowatch, Deacon John Bohush and the generosity of the parishioners at Sts. Peter and Paul in Endicott.

Other diocesan parishes have assisted our small parish including Sts. Peter and Paul Church-Herkimer, St. Nicholas-Cohoes, and St. Nicholas-Auburn. Their prayers, kindness and generosity are proof that the Gospel is alive

and well in our God protected Diocese of New York and New Jersey.

Holy Apostles is a small but vibrant and growing parish that is working tirelessly to "Go forth and teach all nations." The need for an Orthodox Christian presence is very great in the Finger Lakes Region of New York. There are many searching for a spiritual home and our parish offers them an opportunity to worship in truth and in love. By your prayers and continued support, we will offer them more opportunities to discover the love of Christ in their lives.

For more information call:
Fr. Timothy Holowatch (607) 785-0147
Email: holyapostles70@hotmail.com

**There are many
searching for a
spiritual home and
our parish offers
them an opportunity
to worship in truth
and in love.**

The Forum on Orthodox Spirituality: Bringing Together Young Professionals in New York City

by Barbara Zahirsky

If the ancient Romans had power and the ancient Greeks had culture, we modern New Yorkers have it all: power on Wall Street during the week, culture on Broadway on Friday nights and, as Orthodox Christians, church on Sunday. FOS, or the *Forum on Orthodox Spirituality*, is a group organized by and for professional New Yorkers, conducted by Father Frank Marangos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. The group aims to fulfill a need for “deeper spiritual illumination and nourishment” so that Orthodox New Yorkers are not just compartmentalizing their faith into a Sunday trip to church, but developing a “fuller understanding of Orthodox faith and worship, all in the context of contemporary society.”

Fr Marangos is a gifted and interesting lecturer, able to utilize modern themes, mythic tales or movies in ways that bring one back to Orthodox theological and liturgical resources. During Great Lent this year, the lecture series was entitled “*Greeks Bearing Gifts: Mount*

Olympus Meets Manhattan.” Fr. Marangos explored the influence of Greek culture on religion and the parallels and differences between Greek mythology and Christianity.

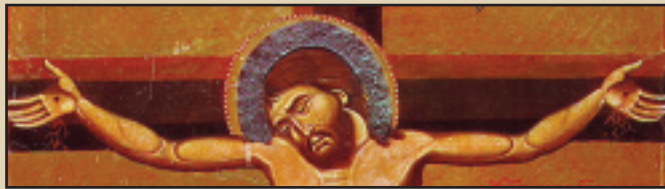
Certain similarities appear in our worship. For example, some verses of the Akathist to the Theotokos may remind us of stanzas written about the female goddesses, such as Athena. However, ultimately the hymnology about the Theotokos describes her as being above all goddesses.

Other comparisons relate more to our relationship with God and the relationship of humans with the gods on Mount Olympus. Jason, of the quest for the Golden Fleece, does not want to be controlled by gods on Mount Olympus, but desires the freedom to make the right choices in his quest. This is reminiscent of our struggle to handle the God-given responsibility of free choice.

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Jacob's
well
Fall 2010

On the Tree of the Cross:



The Patristic Doctrine of Atonement Symposium

Saturday, February 12, 2011 • 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Princeton Theological Seminary • Princeton, New Jersey

Taking its cue from Fr. Georges Florovsky, the eminent 20th century Orthodox Christian theologian who wrote with passion on this topic, this Symposium will explore the doctrine of atonement in some of the same authorities upon which Fr. Florovsky relied: the New Testament, St. Irenaeus of Lyon, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Gregory the Theologian, and others. It will conclude with an analysis of Fr. Florovsky's own writings on atonement, followed by a panel discussion.

This symposium is co-sponsored by the *Fr. Georges Florovsky Orthodox Christian Theological Society* at Princeton University and the *School of Christian Vocation and Mission* at Princeton Theological Seminary.

For more information, go to: http://www.princeton.edu/~florov/patristic_symposium.html

Christ the Saviour Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Paramus, N.J. - With a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy as the centerpiece, the faithful of the Orthodox Christian Church of Christ the Saviour recently celebrated the parish's 50th anniversary. The celebration, which took place on the weekend of September 18-19, 2010, began on Saturday evening with Great Vespers, attended by the Right Rev. +MICHAEL, Bishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. Great Vespers was followed by a reception in the Church's Trapeza with a presentation of a pictorial parish history.



Sunday's Hierarchal Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Bishop +MICHAEL, the parish's rector, Fr. David Vernak, pastor emeritus Fr. John Nehrebecki, 11 visiting priests, and a deacon. At the Liturgy, the parish received a

Gramota from Bishop +Michael for its 50 years of Orthodox witness to Bergen County, N.J. The Divine Liturgy was preceded by the tonsuring of parishioner David Maliniak to the order of Reader.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by an Anniversary banquet at The Brownstone restaurant in Paterson, N.J. During the banquet, speakers included His Grace, Bishop +MICHAEL, Diocesan Chancellor Fr. Joseph Lickwar, Dean of the New Jersey Deanery Fr. Samuel Kedala, and Frs. Vernak and Nehrebecki.

In other Anniversary-related activities, the Parish produced a commemorative journal, a parish cookbook, and a choir CD.

Earlier this year, on Sunday May 2, the community also joyfully celebrated the 80th birthday of Matushka Eugenia Nehrebecki.



Continued from page 21

The FOS lecture audience consisted of about 80 people ranging in age from early thirties to sixties. Many of those in the group already knew each other, but everyone was very polite and it was easy to enter into conversation with those around me. As Fr. Marangos gave his lecture people asked questions and engaged with him, making the evening more dynamic. I enjoyed the fact that I could choose to be an active participant or simply sit back and take in the ideas presented. I would encourage anyone who enjoys intellectual stimulation, wishes for a deeper understanding of the faith and is looking to find a group of people who share the same goals to look into FOS.

The Fall Series is entitled: *The Magi of Manhattan: In Search of the True God – A Scriptural Journey Through the Names of God.*

FOS sessions take place on most Tuesdays throughout the year at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 337 E. 74St. (between 1st and 2nd Ave). More information is available at: <http://www.thecathedralnyc.org/fos-forum-orthodox-spirituality>

Summaries of FOS sessions are available at: www.thecathedralnyc.org/pdf-fos-summaries

Faith in the City Series Features ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH

[Editor's Note: When asked how he was able to get the attention of the New York Daily News, Fr Woodill replied: "I called up the newspaper and got the name of the religion reporter. Next I did an article (pretty much what you see in print) and attached it with some photos and suggested that she use it if possible. She sent an email back and asked if she could send a photographer (my email photos were not good enough). I asked that she send someone to the church on Sunday about 10:20am. The photographer was there taking photos during the liturgy and I used her presence as a prop for the sermon. That was it. A week later I got an email saying that it would be in print on Sunday."]

Religious affiliation: New York and New Jersey Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America

Spiritual leader: The Rev. Joseph Woodill

Address and neighborhood: 14-65 Clintonville St., Whitestone

Years in present location: 95

Size and character of congregation: "Ours is an Orthodox church made of all nationalities. While the founders of the parish were of Slavic descent, the parish today is made up of Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Italian, Belorussian, American, Romanian, Georgian, Latin American, etc., worshipers who were either raised Orthodox, came to Orthodox Christianity after years of spiritual search, or converted from other denominations," said Woodill.

Scheduled services: Sundays at 10 a.m., and Saturday at 5 p.m.

What makes your congregation special: "We are a church striving to be both fully Orthodox and fully American," Woodill said. Largest service and turnout: "Our last parish luncheon on Sept. 19 had a full church for worship and a full hall for homemade meatloaf, about 100 people," he said.

Most prized possession: "Our faith," he said.

Biggest wish-list item: "More people who like to sing," he said.

Proudest moment: "When our Bishop Michael expressed his love for our parish on Aug. 1, 2010, after my installation," he said.



The Rev. Joseph Woodill gives sermon at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Whitestone. Photo by Joy Keh

Biggest issue: "How to explain to Americans that the Orthodox church is not only for certain ethnic groups," he said.

Most memorable service: "The last one, seeing a whole congregation of happy and prayerful people," he said.

Most dedicated volunteer: "There are too many to name. Most parishioners are involved at every level of church life, from cleaning to singing the services," he said.

Other services and programs offered: Church school, Sisters of St. Mary, choir for four-part harmony, and "Learning the Prayer of the Heart" after vespers on Saturday nights.

Contact: (718) 767-7292; stnicholasny.org/

Compiled by Maxine Simpson

Source: October 17, 2010, © New York Daily News, L.P. used with permission

When Life Gives Her Lemons She Makes.... SOUP

Anita Marshall has a special and unique ministry at St. John Chrysostom Eastern Orthodox Church in Woodside, Queens. Laid off 22 months ago from her job as a travel planner, she has filled some of her spare time cooking for our parishioners, many of whom are older adults who live alone or busy professionals who have little time or inclination to cook. Anita whips up a wide selection of healthy soups, stews, pierogis, stuffed peppers and cabbage to keep the parish well fed. All proceeds benefit the Church's general fund.

The selection is varied and seasonal and, if the calendar dictates, Lenten. She is particularly well known for her mushroom barley and gazpacho. There is at least one gourmet selection every week.

"I have time on my hands and the ladies never cook for themselves, so I feel like I'm helping them eat better - healthier," Anita says. "It's great to have something homemade to come home to after a busy day," says one busy professional. "I know I can count on it being meat and dairy free during the fast, so that's a plus," another adds.

"It is not a money-making operation", says Father Daniel, rector of St. John's. "Anita is doing this as a ministry; using her talents and gifts to give back to the parishioners." And, the food is delicious.

MUSHROOM BARLEY (LENTEN) SOUP

2 lb. Each portobello, button and cremini mushrooms, cleaned, stemmed and coarsely chopped (don't discard stems)
1 lb. Bag barley, toasted 5 minutes
16 Cubes knorr vegetable bouillon
6 tbsp. Olive or vegetable oil
3 medium onions, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 leeks, white part only, thoroughly washed and cut into 1/4 inch half moons
3 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup cream sherry or ruby port (optional)
Roux made from 6 tbsp. Each vegetable oil and flour
4 carrots, peeled, cut into edible pieces and boiled in salted water until "al dente"
Salt and pepper to taste

Place mushroom stems in a large kettle and cover with 16 cups water. Bring to a boil and then lower heat to simmer for 15 minutes. Strain broth and discard stems. Return broth to kettle, return to boil, add bouillon cubes and dissolve while maintaining a gentle simmer.

Make a roux from 6 tbsp. each oil and flour, cooking until golden. Add one cup of the broth to the roux to fully dissolve the flour and then add roux mixture to kettle. If you prefer a thicker soup, repeat the process.

Add toasted barley to kettle and cook until barley is just tender (30 -45 minutes).

Heat oil in a large skillet and add onion and leek. Cook until opaque, and then add garlic, optional liquor and chopped mushrooms. Sauté over high heat until mushrooms brown. Add cooked carrots and mushrooms to kettle, season with salt and pepper and allow to simmer 15 minutes to combine flavors.

This soup should be made 24 hours in advance of eating and may be frozen. **SERVES 12**

A List of Twelve Spiritually Edifying Books Found in our Parish Library

by Sara Elisabeth Paulson

Jacob's
well
Fall 2010

How do I overcome sinful ideas and habits? How do I remain true to my faith in the midst of all that surrounds me, including the painful memories within me? How do I allay my fears and worries and trust in God's will? How do I deepen my faith and my prayer?

These are some of the questions that led me to read spiritually edifying books since I discovered Orthodoxy in 2000. Our Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection parish library was founded in honor of Archdeacon Vsevolod Andronoff in 1920. Here is a list of spiritual books that have spoken to me, a convert, in my first decade as an Orthodox Christian.

1. Fr. Seraphim Rose. ***Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*** (St. Herman, 1999)

A thorough and cautionary survey of the spiritual harm done by new age spiritual practices and beliefs. Must read for those attracted by spiritual ideas outside of Orthodoxy.

2. Maximos the Confessor. "Four Centuries on Love." ***Philokalia***, vol. 2. (Faber & Faber, 1981)
St. Maximos stresses the connection between being able to love everyone and detachment towards worldly things. You cannot have one without the other, a lifelong endeavor, but what we are striving for.

3. Bishop of Nafpaktos Hierotheos. ***Orthodox Spirituality***. (Birth of Theotokos Monastery, 1992)

A solid introduction to the difference between Orthodoxy and other forms of Christianity, discusses the basic theology and spiritual path of Orthodox Christians.

4. Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos. ***The illness and cure of the soul in the Orthodox tradition***. (Birth of Theotokos Monastery, 1993)

A conversation transcribed between Nafpaktos and some members of a parish, discussing the four steps to cure (salvation) are true faith, the awareness of one's illness, existence of therapist-priest, and mysteries connected with asceticism.

5. Kontzevitch, I. M. ***The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit***, vol. 1. (St. Herman, 1988)

The chapter on the struggle with the passions is extremely helpful, as are the chapters in Part I on the traditions of asceticism, including a key chapter on prelest.

6. St. Symeon the New Theologian. ***The First-Created Man***. (St. Herman, 2001)

Discusses the idea of repentance vs. blame, and the idea that if Adam and Eve had repented, they would not have been exiled, God would have forgiven them, and gives awareness of the destructive nature of blaming others instead of repenting for what part you have played in a situation.

7. Dorotheos of Gaza. ***Discourses and sayings***. (Cistercian, 1977)

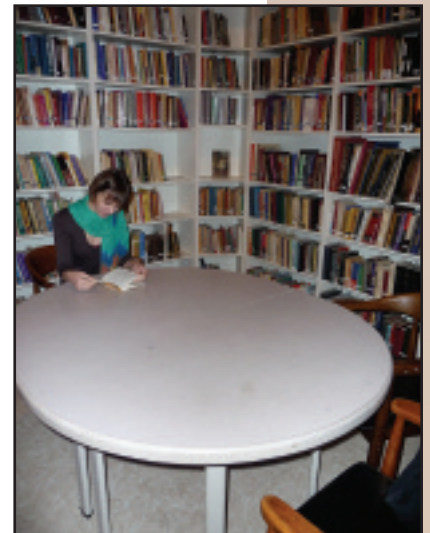
Though thoroughly 6th century in his use of stories to illustrate spiritual truths, the substance of this book reads like a modern psychology text. It is full of helpful advice to safeguard against repeating vices so they do not become habits. He encourages us to ask God for greater endurance and mercy for our weaknesses.

8. ***Unseen Warfare***. (St. Vladimir's Press)

This is a heavy, technical read, but very thorough and helpful in its succinct advices about guarding the senses, the bodily passions, and especially interesting are the chapters on the way that imagination and memory can lead to unwanted thoughts.

9. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. ***Living Prayer***. (Darton, Longwood & Todd, 1966)

Prayer is shedding away all that is not Christ-like in us, and this small deeply reverent book, full of grace and based on BBC radio talk, begs to be re-read.



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They're Your Parents, Too!

How Siblings Can Survive Their Parents' Aging Without Driving Each Other Crazy
by Francine Russo

reviewed by Eugenia Skuby

I'll never forget the conversation. It was spring of 1998, and my brother, middle sister and I were discussing the implications of my own family taking in our mother, then 91, to live with us. Having been warned by several people that I would definitely need to take breaks as often as possible once this journey began, I told my siblings that I would expect them to take Mom at least a couple of times during the year, and if they could not literally "take" her, that they would contribute financially to get the respite care I would need. My "demands" on my siblings seem naive to me now; my brother passed away in 2004 and for many reasons never was able to contribute either emotionally OR financially. My two sisters, thank God, participated in every way possible whenever they could (more on that later). But after reading *They're Your Parents, Too!*, I realize that my request in 1998 was my way of keeping things as "fair" as possible while I was caring for Mom. That is one of the major themes one could take away from this book.

Although not a medical professional herself, Russo wrote the book after already having lost her mother; her contemplation on how difficult issues within her family could have been handled differently was the basis for writing it. The vignettes she included were based on contributors' actual family histories. The fact that Russo had already lost her mom is one that I had in common with her—I had lost my mom just a year before I read this volume. Although I definitely could have benefited from reading it before embarking on the amazing journey of caring for a parent in the winter of her life, I still learned much from it and was comforted in certain ways by reading it when I did.

Contemplated in the book are such questions as: Without the "glue" of the parent who is now gone, what will happen to the relationship of the siblings? What if one sibling feels "shorted" by results of the inheritance? How can the siblings grieve together yet respect each others' individual paths of grief? What if the siblings disagree on end-of-life care? Do we care for Mom at home or place her in a nursing home? What if the care-giving sibling needs to be paid for caring for Dad? Who can help us hash out

our family issues? Why does my spouse seem so angry when it comes to caring for my parent? and Why am I having a hard time setting boundaries with my Mom?

It's impossible to cover here all of the topics which Russo raises. It's so rich with information that, whether you are one of three siblings who are barely speaking or are part of a family that can put past histories aside and focus now on the elderly parent (Russo calls this period the "twilight transition"), this book will be helpful to you on some level. It's a quick read and can easily be used as a manual or at least as a springboard for dialogue and planning. Russo maintains her matter-of-fact yet compassionate style throughout. The third chapter, entitled "Slipping Away: Making Peace with Change and Loss", can resonate fairly deeply if you have already lost a loved one.

Had I used this book as a guide myself, I would have skimmed some sections and paid closer attention to others. This is because when all was said and done, I basically did get all the help I could possibly get from my sisters as well as church family and friends. Thankfully, my sisters and I were able to work things out pretty well, but that's not to say it was always smooth sailing. Mom's medication and diet were triggers for some pretty intense conversations. With both sisters living three hours away from me, as long as we made plans ahead of time, they would take turns coming up and spending weekends (or full weeks, although they dreaded them) with Mom. That was when she was in relatively good health and still ambulatory. In Mom's final years, my sisters visited as often as possible to spend time with her and to give me moral support. At the very least, they were supportive of me and my busy family and would just lend an ear if that's what I needed.

[Eugenia Warhol Skuby, a member of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford, NJ and coordinator of the parish's Caregivers Support Group. Eugenia's mom, Olga Ressetar Warhol, died on April 20, 2009 at the age of 102. Memory Eternal+.]

Continued from page 28

"We'll see you Monday. Find a place, with a shower and a bed, an indoor toilet, place to do laundry, microwave, a TV, running hot water..."

"Yep." He got out. "Thanks." He'd heard it before.

Ayden limped away carrying his bundle...

Dragging his bent left foot behind...

The sun on the back of his worn army fatigue...

The sky - cold and blue - his hair tousled in the wind more and more with each shaky step...

Community, meager as it can be, was as much as we could offer at this point, even the little we had beyond our liturgical once a week. And Ayden would still have to know about it, desire it, pray for it, be able to get to it and make the effort to "come and see..." (John 1:46)

Maybe we and Ayden were mirror-images of each other, limited on opposite sides, isolated in our own sheds. Maybe we could help one another. Maybe the bridge goes both ways.

Admittedly, Orthodox life in America is limited and missing some pieces, but think of how little our fathers and mothers had when they came...

"Father John (St. Innocent) departed for America accompanied by his aging mother, his wife Catherine, his infant son, Innocent, and his brother, Stefan; it took

more than a year of arduous travel. Their first home was a "wretched earthen hut..." But their first task was the construction of a church and to learn the local language, serving the local people by training them in useful crafts and skills..."

They did so much with so little, God accomplished a great work among them. And we who have so much, it's all we can do to remember to make the Sign of the Cross without yawning before we lie down in our bed. Maybe we need a little help. Who doesn't?

And Ayden lying down in the shed

Under the frozen stars

Huddles beneath his blankets

Fully dressed

Tousled head on his bundle

Saying to what Dylan Thomas called

The "close and holy darkness" - Words.

What words?

Only God knows what this boy prays -

Only God know what he prays.

[Fr. Siniari is the pastor of SS Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church, Philadelphia and Pastoral Minister at Covenant House, Atlantic City.]

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10. Mother Raphaela. *Living in Christ*. (St. Vladimir's, 2000)

Like Living Prayer, Mother Raphaela talks about focusing on God and knowing ourselves only by turning toward God.

11. Father John of Kronstadt. *Spiritual Counsels: Select passages from My Life in Christ*. (St. Vladimir's, 1989)

Here is a tome of spiritual guidance for every phase of spritual life. Maybe you are trying to deepen your prayer, how to forgive someone in your life, or how to rid yourself of some kind of sinful activity. Truly a helpful text to read and reflect on so that we shed ourselves of what is false, and little by little stop "missing the mark."

12. *Our Thoughts Determine our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*. (St. Herman, 2009).

Discreet points on aspects of prayer, and espe-

cially how to put into practice the cultivation of thoughts that spread love, peace, and joy to others, not only through our actions and our words, but through the influence of our thoughts.

Do you have an Orthodox book or particular chapter of the Bible that has helped you understand aspects of prayer or forgiveness, or ways to avoid sinful attitudes and behaviors? If so, please add to this list virtually on our Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection facebook page. Add a discussion named as the title of the book, and in the comment box, share the ways the book helped you. If you are not a member of facebook, email me your recommendation, and I can post it.

[Sara Elisabeth Paulson coordinates the library at the Cathedral of the Holy Protection, New York City. She can be reached at: coralinej@gmail.com]

One Beggar Telling Another Beggar Where to Find Bread

Who Doesn't?

by Fr. Stephen Sinari

Across the table sat Ayden.
Handsome. Tall. Great head of hair.
Living in a tool-shed in the snow.
Indoors this morning for a change.
Just checking each other out.
Two years in that shed.
Wouldn't have a dog out like that...

When we called his number he was cautious. We asked if we could visit, maybe he could help us because we didn't know his neighborhood. Maybe he knew someone who needed a little help - Who doesn't?

Sometimes helping is like building a bridge, like this:
Engagement-Relationship-Community-Communion.

Engagement begins with humility. It stoops down and washes the feet of the other.

Relationship looks the other in the face and recognizes the plight of our shared human condition.

Community embraces the other in suffering and in joy and offers hope through a healing relationship in Christ.

Through humility we recognize in the other- the stranger, the foreigner, that tribe across the river - the scary fact that we share a common end and so a common need for the bridge of life, Jesus Christ, as well as for one another.

Ayden walks slow.
Can't remember that last time he saw mom.
Local cops let him wash-up at the station.
Looks like he works out - on the right side of his body.
Left side's bent - Twisted - Backwards.
Had a stroke when he was five.
Brokenhearted folks just let it roll after that.

Never seen such an affable sad-eyed kid as Ayden.
Never in twenty years in the street.
Drug himself all the way over to the diner.
Took his fork before he ate,
slipped it into the bent back hook of a left hand
and polished it with a paper napkin with his right.
Waitress noticed. She knew he'd been living in a shed.
You could smell it.
Engagement takes getting that close...

And to grow,
Engagement needs relationship.
Relationship needs community and
Community needs Communion...
But Communion is of God.
We can't get there on our own.

Ayden's cell-phone rings.
A lady with a room to rent turns him down.
"I don't want no handicap," she says. It doesn't faze him.
Later she calls back, "Nobody else wants it."
He clicks her off. "Maybe you missed an opportunity, Ayd?"
"Her too," he says. "Okay." This could be the start of honest talk.

Ayden is some kind of relationship mystery,
Alone in a shed, with some little device,
Talking, and texting, and face-booking with far-away people he's never going to see. Something was missing. Felt like counterfeit currency: Sterile, like a clone in a Petri-dish, a lifeless relationship. No creative community, no chance of reproducing, no Eucharist, no Communion, no Creator, no nothing...

The place was crowding up. The waitress brought the tab.
Sunday after liturgy Antigone slipped me money. So I paid the bill. "C'mon, get in, we'll drive ya'." Odd ... leaving the diner and him with still no place to go except back to that shed.

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Jacob's well

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