

THE NORTH STAR

SUMMER 2006

A PUBLICATION OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF ALASKA

VOLUME 5

LOOKING BACK... MOVING FORWARD

BEAUTIFUL SAINT GEORGE ISLAND

EUCCHARISTIC LIVING



Published three times a year with the blessing of His Grace, the Right Reverend NIKOLAI Bishop of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska

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His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI, and the editorial staff of *The North Star* wish to express their gratitude for the continued support of this publication. If you would like to contribute please send donations to the Chancery (address above) and mark your donation North Star. Thank you for your generous support that allows us to continue to publish and distribute *The North Star* throughout the world.

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SUBDEACON DANIEL ASKOAK

TO THE HOLY DIACONATE FEBRUARY 12, 2006
TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD FEBRUARY 15, 2006

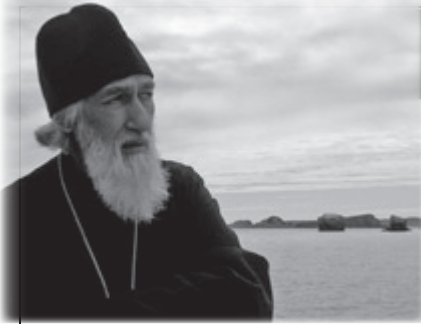
In the Life of the Church



On the cover:
Saint George the Great Martyr Church on remote Saint George Island, one of the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea.



His Grace with Annie Koppang and the newly restored icon of St. Herman, which now adorns the seminary refectory.



LOOKING BACK... MOVING FORWARD

An open letter to my Dear and Faithful Children of the God-protected Diocese of Alaska

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

To the Faithful and Supporters of the God Protected Diocese of Alaska,

June 21, 2001 marked the beginning of a life-long journey in this God Protected Diocese of Alaska. I recall that glorious summer day when I was greeted so warmly by the faithful at the Anchorage International Airport. They welcomed my arrival in true Orthodox tradition, carrying the cross, banners and icons. Thanks be to Almighty God that the faithful of this Diocese continue this gracious reception on my every visit throughout my Diocese. With the approach of my fifth anniversary, it is constructive to reflect on how I found the Diocese when I arrived and to review what we have been able to accomplish during these past five years.

Looking Back

Five years ago, the Diocese of Alaska was in a troubled state. There was disorganization, factionalism, and low morale. It was into this environment that His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS sent me as the vicar bishop to minister to the needs of the Diocese. Serving in the capacity of vicar bishop, I lacked administrative authority and required direction from the Metropolitan to do anything officially. By October of that year it became clear to His Beatitude that the Diocese of Alaska needed a ruling bishop. He indicated that he wanted an election to take place at the Assembly scheduled to meet on October 31 and that he wanted to present me for nomination as the ruling bishop. After the nomination by the Diocesan Assembly of October 31st the Holy Synod elected me as the ruling bishop on November 14, 2001. I came here as a vicar bishop not expecting to stay, thinking that once my directive "to put the house in order" was accomplished, I would return to the Diocese of the West. But that was my plan not God's.

Upon my arrival there were twenty-six priests and ten deacons. Of that number, seven were suspended, and/or deposed. One was released to another diocese and four have since retired. Among the active priests only sixteen were living in communities to which they were assigned.

A week after my arrival I had my first meeting with the Deans. Morale was extremely low. I saw men who had grown up together, gone to seminary and even married into one another's families estranged. It was disheartening to witness this attitude among clergy and to discover that this mood pervaded the Diocese as a whole.

The seeds of dissension were everywhere. We discovered papers from Bishop Innocent petitioning ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia) to receive him into their jurisdiction. The suspended bishop had promised that half the parishes would join immediately and within a year the remainder would follow. It was obvious that we needed legal advice to deal with this nest of problems. With assistance from Craig Norville a prominent attorney in Las Vegas and legal council for the Diocese of the West, and Jonathan Russin, the legal counsel for the Orthodox Church in America, in Washington DC, we selected the law firm of Hughes Thorsness to represent us. They have expertise in canonical law and are one of the largest and most prestigious law firms in Alaska. It saddened me that we had to prepare for a possible legal battle.

Equally troubling was the state of affairs at St. Herman Seminary in Kodiak. This northern-most Orthodox seminary located on the island where St. Herman and the early missionaries served had been badly neglected both academically and structurally. When I arrived, the number of seminarians had dwindled to two students enrolled for the coming year. The buildings on the campus were in deplorable shape and the beautiful chapel was left unfinished. The east wall of the refectory was near to collapsing from rot. One of the most tragic losses to the Seminary occurred when Bishop Innocent voluntarily withdrew the Seminary's accreditation. We have struggled to rectify this since my arrival.

The Diocese's one disposable asset was in Anchorage. We owned a property on 24th Street that had been purchased with funds a donor presented to Archbishop Gregory for the Diocese. In 2001 it was a mold ridden complex located in a questionable neighborhood. By 2002 we had cleaned it up and were able to sell it with a profit.

Looking back on those first days and months after my arrival and assessing where we are today, I have confidence that with God's help we will continue on the right path to build up this first Orthodox Diocese of North America.

Moving Forward

CLERGY

In five years we have increased the number of active priests from 26 to 39; active deacons from 10 to 11 and there are now five retired priests. By July 2006 there will be 37 priests living and serving in the communities to which they are assigned. The remaining two are full time staff members at the Seminary.

I am pleased to report that with the help of Southcentral Foundation, we have been able to implement a plan which provides full health care coverage for our clergy—a great achievement! And we have partnered with them in an initiative to bring wellness to our Church communities addressing abuse and addiction.

Clergy serve with His Grace at the annual Clergy Retreat held in Anchorage

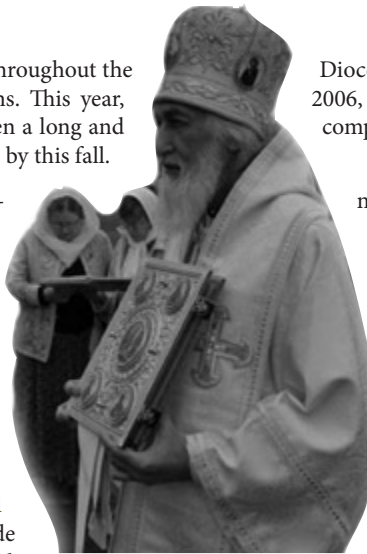


THE SEMINARY

By the end of summer 2001, we had made visits throughout the Diocese and recruited enough new students that we were able to begin the academic year with ten seminarians. This year, we were ordained to the Holy Priesthood. It has been a long and complex effort to regain our accreditation, but through God's mercy we expect to have provisional accreditation by this fall.

I instituted a policy early in my tenure that seminarians should not be burdened by indebtedness when they finished their seminary training and returned to the villages. Therefore, all students who intend to remain in Alaska pay no tuition or housing. Another program that was initiated is the "Adopt-a-Seminarian" through Outreach Alaska. This program has a capable administrator, Mary Ann Khoury, who seeks financial support nationally for our students. My goal has been to restore the Seminary to the mission of Orthodoxy training students to be the best leaders for the Visit Outreach Alaska on the world-wide web.

With panoramic views in every direction, today the buildings and grounds of St. Herman Seminary resemble a story-book campus. Visitors often rethey stroll along the campus boardwalks. View www.sthermanseminary.org/progress.html for more information. Many hours even days were donated to refurbish the seminary and personal donations were made amounting to thousands of dollars. The OCMC and other volunteer groups, especially led by the Arch-priest Anthony Karbo from Colorado Springs, have come almost yearly to work on the Seminary and Spruce Island. The church at Spruce Island has been completely reconstructed primarily through donations from outside the Diocese. It was consecrated last year on the Feast of Ss Sergius and Herman of Valaam, July 11, the patrons of the church. On September 24, (1794), the date which commemorates the arrival of this historic missionary team from Russia we celebrate the Patronal Feast of the campus Church, All Saints of Alaska. After years 'in progress' this beautiful log church is now in active and daily use. Stylistically it is reminiscent of an eighteenth-century Russian village church, a design similar to the early missionary church on Spruce Island. A new set of bells from Russia is scheduled to be installed soon and blessed at this year's Pilgrimage.



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the buildings and grounds of St. Herman Seminary mark on the feeling of tranquility they experience as this transformation on our new seminary website at: Many hours even days were donated to refurbish the amounting to thousands of dollars. The OCMC and priest Anthony Karbo from Colorado Springs, have come almost yearly to work on the Seminary and Spruce Island. The church at Spruce Island has been completely reconstructed primarily through donations from outside the Diocese. It was consecrated last year on the Feast of Ss Sergius and Herman of Valaam, July 11, the patrons of the church. On September 24, (1794), the date which commemorates the arrival of this historic missionary team from Russia we celebrate the Patronal Feast of the campus Church, All Saints of Alaska. After years 'in progress' this beautiful log church is now in active and daily use. Stylistically it is reminiscent of an eighteenth-century Russian village church, a design similar to the early missionary church on Spruce Island. A new set of bells from Russia is scheduled to be installed soon and blessed at this year's Pilgrimage.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

In March of 2002 we established ROSSIA (Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska). It is a non-profit corporation with professional volunteers who are interested in rebuilding our sacred sites in Alaska. Most of the members are non-Orthodox. Next year we are hoping to move our volunteer base outside Kodiak to a village on the Kuskokwim, Chuathbaluk (if you can pronounce the name of this village, you belong in Alaska!) This church of St. Sergius of Radonezh was consecrated by St. Tikhon in 1905. The plans are posted online at ROSSIA's website: www.rossialaska.org/pdf/chuathbaluk.pdf St. Nicholas Church and Rectory in Juneau, Alaska are other structures designated by ROSSIA are in need of repair and are first on the priority list for renovation.

EXPANSION & PRESENCE

With the sale of our building on 24th Street, we were able to purchase the current Chancery and a ten-plex across from the Cathedral. Later, in 2003, we purchased a large property at 605 A Street in downtown Anchorage giving us visibility in a central location. The Holy Trinity Chapel, Russian Orthodox Museum, a museum gift shop, and our own coffee shop: *Cupola Coffee* are all in this building. It is fast becoming a landmark and destination point in Anchorage ideally located directly across the street from the large Anchorage Museum on the corner of two major streets.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND TITHING.

Throughout my life I have understood the importance of financial accountability, recognizing that many generous institutions and individuals trust us to use funds as they were intended. All seminary funds are audited by a professional accounting firm in Kodiak and a local CPA in Anchorage audits our diocesan assets so that there is no question as to where monies are spent and nothing is hidden. These audits were initiated from the very beginning of my tenure here in Alaska and will continue.

Two years ago my Diocese voted to give 10% of our income to the Orthodox Church in America as our support. We are scripturally instructed to personally tithe, and it is my belief and conviction that this practice should extend to the diocesan level.

LANDS

When Alaska was sold to the United States by Russia, the Purchase Treaty which was signed by both parties provided that certain lands and other properties were assigned to the Orthodox Church in Alaska. I would like to emphasize that the Church was Alaska in those days. It has been my goal since I arrived here to straighten out all these land questions dating to that sale in 1867—not a small feat. Our law firm recommended a capable woman who has 15 years experience as a licensed broker and 12 years as the Executive Administrator for the Real Estate Commission for the State of Alaska. She has also worked on lands' questions for the Presbyterian Church in Alaska. It was decided that we needed to do a three tier assessment of our properties and their status. With the first contract we asked our professional to investigate what lands belonged to us according to the historical ownership records held by the Diocese. The second year we contracted her to make certain that we actually had this land in our possession. The third and final phase was to ensure that the lands we held were solidly in our possession. If there were existing leases we made sure that they were up to date. Where leases could be established on properties in use by others, we made sure these were enforced. The number of acres deeded to the Church according to the provisions of the purchase treaty was 888.92. Of



that number today we have documented sales and/or takings through eminent domain for 63.65 acres and the Diocese holds title to 825.27 with approximately half being in two large plots, one in Russian Mission and the other in Chuathbaluk. Other parcels owned by the Diocese have been bequests and gifts for church sites or rectories.

Since my arrival three parcels of the originally deeded land have been sold.

- 1) USS 656 (Cordova) .25 acres of the patented 2.94 which would have been lost to adverse possession if not sold. Sales price: \$38,000.
- 2) USS 459 (Uganuk Bay). This property is an inaccessible fishing camp which would also have been lost to adverse possession if not sold – and we would not have known about the adverse possession had the squatter not informed us. Sales Price: \$20,000.
- 3) USS 872 (Chuathbaluk). To accommodate installation of public utilities for the village. Acre for acre exchange, no cash involved.

The monies that we receive from leases are used to support the Diocese and amount to approximately \$80,000 per year. Taxes, legal expenses and contractual costs are taken from that total and the Diocese realizes approximately \$40,000 year.

I hope that this review of my five-year tenure in Alaska illustrates the serious attention that has been dedicated to ensuring that the Diocese of Alaska is a viable and healthy institution. Every precaution has been taken to guarantee her integrity and independence as a diocese. Comparing the state of affairs when I arrived to where we are today, it should be obvious that the care and responsibility for this diocese is taken very seriously—not just by me but by all my staff and clergy. What God has entrusted to me is sacred and I treat it as such. By the Grace of God, my letter for The North Star in November will look to the future. I pray that God will continue to give me the strength to serve His Holy Church here in Alaska, and that these efforts will be to His Glory.



+ Bishop Nikolai

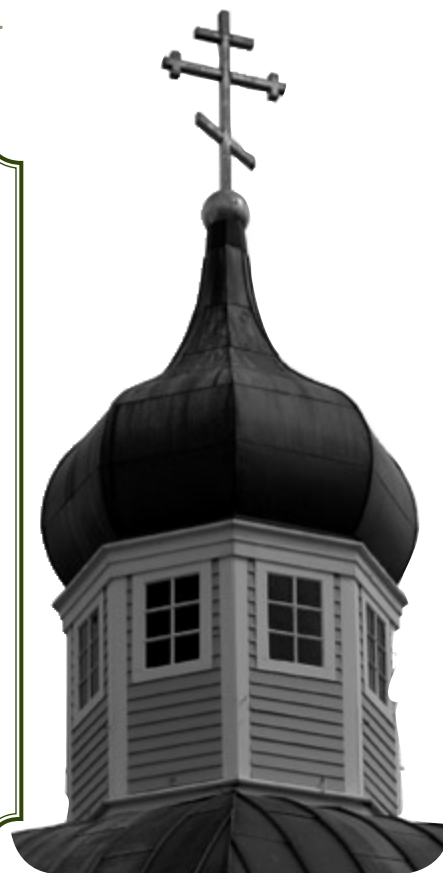
On the shores where the Holy Orthodox Faith was first brought to North America

th Anniversary

On November 11th-14th the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska will not only celebrate its annual Diocesan Assembly in Anchorage, Alaska, but will also celebrate as a Diocesan Family with its Hierarch on the occasion of his 5th Anniversary as bishop of the Diocese. Faithful and clergy from around the Diocese will be in attendance to congratulate His Grace on his anniversary and to pray to Almighty God that His Grace be granted many more years.

Those who will not already participate in the festivities due to the Diocesan Assembly are encouraged to come to Anchorage for the scheduled days of prayer and celebration, November 11th-14th. November 12th will feature a festive Divine Liturgy followed by a Grand Banquet at St. Innocent Cathedral.

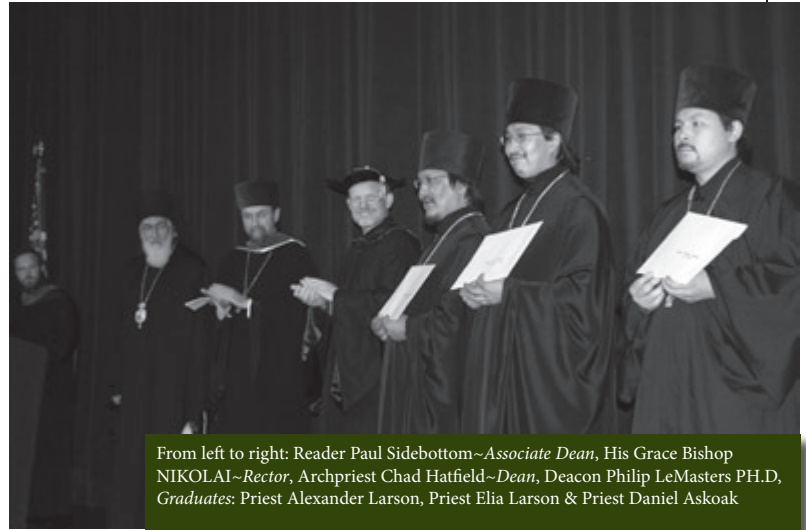
For more information about the event, travel or lodging arrangements: Please contact Archimandrite Isidore at the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska: 907-279-0025



Saint Herman Seminary Commencement Address

Deacon Philip LeMasters PH.D.

Your Grace, esteemed members of the Board of Trustees, distinguished members of the faculty and administration, Very Reverend and Reverend clergy, honored graduates and family members, seminarians, faithful and guests, I am humbled by the invitation to address you today in this God-protected center of the Holy Orthodox faith. After long years of study, the members of the senior class are graduating, having completed their formal education at St. Herman Orthodox Theological Seminary. To the graduates I say, "Fathers, rejoice! You are worthy of honor for completing this demanding course of study in preparation for service in Christ's Holy Church!" To their families I say, "Rejoice! Your sons, brothers, husbands and fathers have excelled in their studies. Your many sacrifices have made this blessed day possible!" I am honored to join with you in this long-awaited and memorable celebration. Our forefathers in the faith in Alaska and North America, St. Herman, St. Innocent, St. Juvenaly, St. Yakov, and St. Peter the Aleut rejoice in the zeal our honored graduates have for Orthodoxy in Alaska, for the growth and strength of the Body of Christ in America's Holy Land. May our graduates follow their examples of prayer, humility and evangelism as they commence



From left to right: Reader Paul Sidebottom~Associate Dean, His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI~Rector, Archpriest Chad Hatfield~Dean, Deacon Philip LeMasters PH.D., Graduates: Priest Alexander Larson, Priest Elia Larson & Priest Daniel Askoak

from this seminary to new parishes and ministries.

Surely, the most joyful dimension of a seminary graduation lies not in the honor given for academic accomplishment alone but in the recognition that pious men have offered their lives to God for service in His Church. The model of all offering, of all sacrifice, is—of

course—our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, who offered Himself to the Father in free obedience and love for the salvation of the world. During this season of Pascha,

we rejoice that we have received the unending joy of the Kingdom through Jesus Christ's offering of Himself on the Cross and subsequent victory over sin and death in His glorious third-day

resurrection. We are joined to our Lord's offering and salvation when we receive His Body and Blood in the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist. As those nourished by "the medicine of immortality," we are called to offer our lives—every bit of our existence—to the Holy Trinity for healing, transformation and fulfillment. When we take the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ into our own body and blood, His life becomes ours. Jesus Christ is the Vine, and we are His branches. His way of complete self-offering to the Father becomes our way. All of our life is to become eucharistic, a Christlike offering of thanksgiving and praise to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Father Patrick Henry Reardon has written, "The goal of the Holy Eucharist is not the consecration of bread and wine, but the consecration of human beings."

Let us attend to this sublime vision of a

consecrated, eucharistic life. First, think of bread and wine, the fruit of someone's vineyard and the product of someone's kitchen. Apart from the self-offering of Jesus Christ, bread and wine remain bread and wine. They are the product of God's good creation, requiring both the fruits of the earth and the work of human beings. Yet they are limited to this world, this life of decay and corruption. When joined with the self-offering of the Lord, however, they become His Body and Blood, our Holy Communion in Jesus Christ, our participation in the Kingdom of Heaven and life eternal.

The same is true of our lives. We bear the image of God but are corrupt and mortal because of the sinful path we have chosen, both collectively and personally. We have offered ourselves and our world to ourselves, being slaves of our own passions. But when by the power of the Holy Spirit we are united with our Lord's self-offering to the Father, we are transfused and transformed by the Divine Energies. Christ is the Vine, and we are the branches. His eternal life becomes ours; we are deified, shining with the Light of a Kingdom beyond this world. Our vocation to become like

God is fulfilled not by our own power but by that of the God-Man, Who has conquered sin and death on our behalf. Truly to commune with the Lord is to offer our lives to Him, to be united with Him in

Truly to commune with the Lord is to offer our lives to Him, to be united with Him in every facet of our existence, to participate in the life of the Kingdom of Heaven even now.

every facet of our existence, to participate in the life of the Kingdom of Heaven even now. Our lives become eucharistic when, as those nourished by the Body and Blood of the Lord, we offer ourselves to God fully and without reservation.

While a true statement for any Orthodox Christian, this call to eucharistic living is crucially important for the clergy, for ministry fundamentally is an act of self-offering, of offering one's life to the Father, in union with the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Faithful clergymen do not offer only part of their lives to the Lord, but every dimension of who they are. They are on holy ground not only when they serve at the Holy Table, but every moment of their lives. They serve Christ not only in the church temple, but in every encounter with those who bear the image of God—namely, in every person whom they meet. In a world that prizes selfishness, they give themselves away to their spiritual children and neighbors. In a culture that teaches us to worship ourselves, they worship the one, true God with their lives. In a time when so many fall victim to substance



abuse and harm those in their own families and homes, they are models of a godly, spiritually healthy way of life. Even as bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord in the offering of the Eucharist, we are to offer every dimension of our lives to the Holy Trinity. It is through such eucharistic offering that we grow in holiness, that we come to manifest the healing and transformation of the Kingdom in every facet of life, in every relationship, in every thought, word and deed.

For married clergy, the relationship between husband and wife is a crucial dimension of such self-offering. Surely, there is no human relationship that affects the course of our lives so profoundly as that of marriage. The one-flesh union of husband and wife changes our very identity. If we do not offer this relationship to God, then we have not truly offered our lives to Him.

Each day, Father and Matushka need the Lord's blessing to transform the water of their common life as man and woman into the wine of the Kingdom of Heaven. Their marriage is to manifest the relationship between Christ and the Church, showing forth the headship of selfless love and mutual submission. Indeed, their entire family life is to be a sign of the peace and joy of the Kingdom. Given the challenges faced by any married couple today, the journey of the priest and his wife often will be difficult, for the countless demands of pastoral ministry provide many additional opportunities to bear the cross, to die to self as martyrs for the Kingdom. Of course, we sinners do not want to die to self and often allow anger, selfishness, resentment and a refusal to forgive to corrupt our marriages, families and homes.

The priest and his matushka are called to live eucharistically by making their marriage an offering to the Lord, by opening every dimension of their relationship to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Their marriage is a Holy Communion in which they share a common life with each other and with Jesus Christ. God blesses their one-flesh union with children, through whom they find countless opportunities for self-sacrifice and offering—of themselves and their children—every day of their lives in ways that they could not have imagined before becoming parents.

The priest should model for the people how to offer all the blessings of their lives—and life itself—to the Holy Trinity. Surely, the blessings of marriage and children must be among the firstfruits we offer to the Lord. Given the profundity of marriage and parenthood in our lives, we will not offer ourselves to the Lord if we withhold these crucial dimensions of ourselves from the offering. These good gifts are like bread and wine; if we offer them to God in thanksgiving and praise, they will manifest the peace and



ourselves and our families are the natural consequences of failing to offer our marriages and our children to the Lord. We simply cannot find true healing for our souls, minds, bodies, families and relationships without Him.

How dangerous, then, are the temptations to view the Eucharist as a particular religious service that somehow is separate from the real life demands of pastoring a church, caring for a family and undertaking a host of other mundane tasks. Holy Communion does not occur only during the time allotted for the Divine Liturgy; indeed, all of life is to be Holy Communion, our participation in the Mystery of our Lord's love, healing and transformation; all of life is to be a Divine Liturgy, the work of the people in offering themselves to the Holy Trinity in praise and adoration. The eucharistic life is a liturgical life in which we worship the Lord in every thought and action, in every relationship, in every use of time, energy and money. There is nothing profane, not intended for blessing, healing and transformation by the grace of God. But we make profane that which we do not offer to the Lord. If we live eucharistically, the Holy Spirit will sanctify that which we offer to the Father in praise and thanksgiving. Such a life will shine forth with the holiness of God, bearing witness to the present reality of our Lord's victory over death and sin and showing forth the true hope of the world.

Fathers, your people will learn that they are to offer their lives to the Lord only if you teach them this deep truth by word and deed. Your flocks will hear this message only if you live eucharistically, only if the people see and experience in you a life ablaze with the Uncreated Energies of God. Everything about your ministry and life should proclaim, "Come, receive the Light!" Only a lit candle may transmit the Light. Be that candle for your people. Be the iron made red hot by the Fire that transfers the Divine Energies to others. Be an offering that inspires others to offer themselves to the Holy Trinity. Serve the Eucharist to your people not only when they approach the chalice, but in every interaction you have with them. By word, deed, example and prayer, enable your people to offer themselves to the Lord.

Remember to be watchful, mindful and vigilant in even the small details of how you live, for temptations will surround you, temptations that—if you surrender to them—may de-

stroy your ministry, marriage, family and life in Christ. Every wholesome dimension of our lives may be offered to God for blessing and transformation, but our sins are by definition corruptions of that which is good. The Lord does not bless our sins, but calls us to constant vigilance against them. Consider the response of St. Silouan the Athonite to the offer of a cigarette by a shopkeeper. After the shopkeeper went on and on trying to persuade the saint to smoke, Holy Father Silouan said, "Before you light up a cigarette, pray and repeat one 'Our Father.'" To this the shopkeeper replied, "Praying before having a smoke somehow doesn't work." To this St. Silouan observed, "So better not start anything which cannot be preceded by untroubled prayer."



SHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The Saint Herman Seminary alumni association is active in supporting the ongoing efforts at the seminary. In 2003 the association announced the Associate Alumni Program. This offers an opportunity for anyone who did not attend SHS to become associate alumnists. Annual dues are \$25 per year or \$500 for a life-time membership. These funds will be used to provide continuing education opportunities to Alaskan clergy. By joining this group members will receive an Associate Alumni Certificate issued at graduations and they will enjoy all of the privileges of regular alumni. This adoption by SHS is yet another way to support the work of Orthodoxy in Alaska. Applications can be obtained by calling or emailing Archpriest Chad Hatfield (907) 486-3524 frchad@hatfield.net

joy of the Kingdom, they will shine with the Uncreated Light. But if we keep them to ourselves, they will fall prey to death and corruption, for they and we will remain captive to the powers of this world. Abuse and decay of





Fr. Alexander receives a gift from his Outreach Alaska sponsors: Priest Gary & Matushka Mary Breton

Fathers, if you turn away from every thought, word and deed that cannot be preceded by untroubled prayer, you will stay on the true and narrow path

to the Kingdom of Heaven, and your lives and ministries will be worthy offerings, “living sacrifices,” to the glory of God. And your people will respond to your words about mindfulness and vigilance against sin only if your life manifests the fruits of watchfulness: the peace, joy, love and humility of the Kingdom.

Human beings become living flames by the power of the Holy Spirit when they have offered themselves fully to the Lord. Fathers, do not rest content with offering bread and wine; offer yourselves to the Father. Brothers, do not stop with serving the Liturgy; live the Liturgy in the praise of God each day. Honored graduates, let nothing distract you from the path of daily prayer, mindfulness, service, repentance and love that are necessary for you to make of your life a Eucharist. And even as the Church participates in the one offering of Jesus Christ, the one Eucharist, again and again at every Holy Table in the world, remember that you are called to offer the entirety of your life—each day and in every thought, word and deed—again and again, to the Holy Trinity. We stand in awe at the heavenly worship of the Divine Liturgy and receive our Lord with fear and trembling, confessing that we are the chief of sinners and unworthy of Him. With this same humility, let us recognize that we live each day before the Lord, in communion with Him as branches of the true Vine, as members of His Body. Any part of us that we do not unite to Him will wither and die, having no life within it.

Our life in Christ is a journey, an ever-growing personal relationship in which we are to shine ever more brightly with the light and love of God. As the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, we are to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect. This is an eternal goal of continuous, infinite growth in holiness, beyond the comprehension of created minds and made possible by the unfathomable mercy and love of God. And it is a reminder that we may never rest content and say that we have arrived. No matter where we are on the journey of theosis, we have a long way to go. We must continue offering our lives to the Lord, welcoming each new day as an opportunity for greater healing and transformation by the Uncreated Divine Energies of God. Let us never rest content, then, with the offering of our lives that we made yesterday, this morning, and even right now. We must follow the teaching of St. Paul to “press on

toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

Fathers, the world in which you will minister is dark, and desperately in need of living flames, living sacrifices, which overcome the black night of sin and death into which we have fallen. Addiction, the abuse of spouses and children, sexual immorality, hopelessness and lack of zeal for the faith are symptoms of our preference for darkness over light, of our failure to live eucharistically. For our salvation, the eternal Son of God became incarnate, the true God-Man, to heal our darkened, corrupt, mortal and weak humanity. He took upon Himself the full consequences of sin and death in order to conquer them and bring us into the very life of God. Now we all stand before Him with the question of what to do with our humanity, what to do with our lives, as persons who bear His image and likeness. Fathers, graduates, and brothers, there is only one answer: we must offer every bit of our existence to Him—every dimension of our life and personhood—that the healing the New Adam has brought to our race will be fully present and effectual in us. Bread and wine find their fulfillment in the offering of the Eucharist and are transformed in heavenly, ineffable ways that no created mind may comprehend. Human beings, likewise, find their sublime fulfillment in eucharistic offering to the Lord, both in receiving Holy Communion and in living in constant Holy Communion with Him.

I challenge you, Fathers, brothers, and graduates, to offer your seminary education—all that you have learned, all the spiritual formation that you have experienced—to the Father in union with the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Go from this place to minister and live eucharistically, in your parishes, your homes and all your undertakings, no matter how mundane they may seem. And thus shine forth with the Light of the unending day of our Lord’s Kingdom in a world so full of darkness, and which so desperately needs that Light.



A Time for Reunion

I am humbled by the invitation to address you in this God-protected seminary in America’s Holy Land. May we all follow in the way of the great saints, missionaries and martyrs who offered their lives—their body and blood—to the Lord, to bring the Holy Orthodox faith to North America. Again, I offer my congratulations to the graduates and their families. I thank you for your attention, and ask for your prayers.

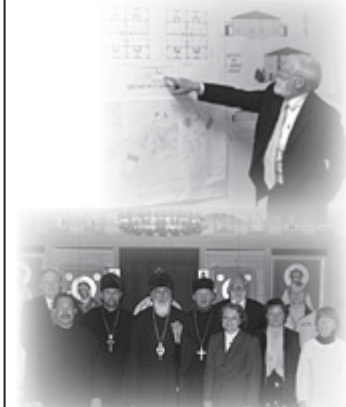
**PROTOPRESBYTER JOSEPH KRETA
SCHOLARSHIP**

IN HONOR OF PROTOPRESBYTER JOSEPH KRETA A
SCHOLARSHIP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE FUR-
THERANCE OF EDUCATING ALASKA’S FUTURE CLERGY.
CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE MADE BY CONTACTING THE
SEMINARY AT:

SAINT HERMAN SEMINARY
414 MISSION RD
KODIAK AK 99615
(907) 486-3524

At the May meeting of the St. Herman Seminary Board of Trustees meeting the plans for the new housing for married students, which was approved in June of 2005, were reviewed and adjustments were made to provide eight new apartments on campus. The complex will cost one million dollars. All of the trustees are now invested in the project as the fund raising effort continues with board leadership. Matushka Mary Buletza from Brick, New Jersey was elected as a new board member. Her expertise as a CPA will be a most welcome addition to the board and to this fund raising effort on behalf of our married student needs.

The SHS Board also endorsed a new scholarship program to enhance the annual fund. In honor of the first Orthodox Missionaries who landed in Kodiak in 1794 the goal is to attract 212 donors to give \$1,000 scholarships. With all of our seminarians receiving full room and board and books, this amount will fill the gaps in annual operating costs. Donors may contribute directly by contacting the seminary or visiting the seminary website at sthermanseminary.org for current information.



Around the Community

Harsh Climate

The beautiful blue cupolas and crosses adorning the outside of All Saints of Alaska Church on the campus of St. Herman Seminary



had to be taken down this Spring due to high winds and rot. The harsh Kodiak winter seasons have taken their toll on the wood structures.



The church has become a local landmark and the absence of the domes and crosses has been noticed by folks throughout the community.

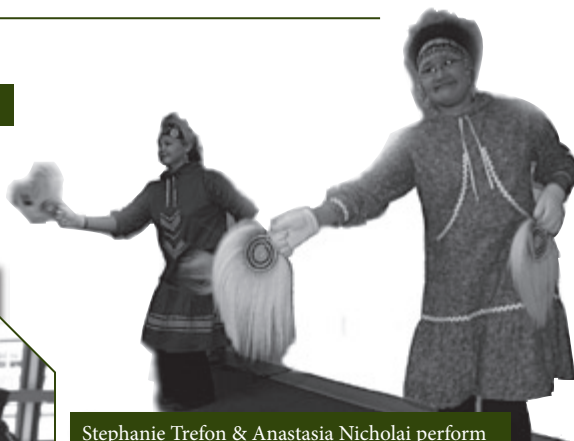
Replacements are to come from Russia and can be sponsored for \$4000.00 each, which includes the dome, cross and shipping. If you are interested contact the seminary office at: (907) 486-3524



The Blessing of the Fleet from Pier 2, Kodiak



SHS Graduation Dinner



Stephanie Trefon & Anastasia Nicholai perform Yup'k Dance for the community



THE CLASS OF 2006

On May 21, 2006, St. Herman Seminary held its 33rd graduation. Over 120 people gathered for the exercises at Kodiak High School's auditorium. Guests included the graduates' families, local parishioners, and Kodiak's local state representative. His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI made note of the remarkable progress seen in the life of the Seminary. This year's graduating class was particularly distinguished. All three graduates had been ordained during their senior year, so the Seminary community was blessed with each new priest's first liturgies. All three graduates earned academic honors. The Priests Alexander Larson and Elia Larson both graduated magna cum laude, which is the first time that any class had two graduates earning high honors. Priest Daniel Askoak graduated cum laude. The Hieromonk John (Anderson) from St. Michael's Skete in Cañones, New Mexico, also completed his one year of studies. Each of the graduates also have their assigned communities. Priest Alexander will serve in Kwethluk on the Kuskokwim River; Kwethluk is the largest village in the diocese. Priest Elia will serve the historic St. Michael's Cathedral in Sitka. Priest Daniel will serve Nondalton, the largest village on Lake Iliamna. In addition, twenty new associate alumni of the Seminary were enrolled, representing 15 states and four jurisdictions.

Deacon Philip LeMasters, Ph. D., the Turner Distinguished Chair of Religion and Philosophy at McMurray University in Abilene, Texas, was the commencement speaker. Deacon Philip's practical address matched a theme close to the Seminary community: eucharistic living. The following day Deacon Philip offered special lectures in Christian living and family life for SHS's annual Education Day.

The graduation ceremonies were followed by a banquet catered by the Chowder House, and served by St. Innocent Academy. The Academy also provided music for both the graduation exercises and banquet. During the banquet Certificates of Appreciation were offered to Outreach Alaska's Adopt-A-Seminarian sponsors. Representing the sponsors, Priest Gary Breton and his family were present to congratulate the graduates. Gifts from each of the graduates' sponsors were presented as well. †



SAINT GEORGE ISLAND



The Faithful of St. George Church



Veneration of the Cross

Pristine Interior of St. George Church



This year for the Sunday of Antipascha, or St. Thomas Sunday, His Grace visited the village and Island of St. George and the church of The Holy Great Martyr, St. George the Victorious; founded in 1833. The village of St. George was created by the Russians to operate their sealing enterprise and the people who live here were relocated from other parts of the Aleutian Islands. It is a community strong in Orthodox tradition and history comprised of about 100 people, whose primary economy is the halibut fishing industry. During World War II the people of St. George, along with their priest, Archimandrite Theodosii, were evacuated from the Island and interned in camps in Southeast Alaska where many suffered and lost their lives do to the harsh and inhumane living conditions.

The visit of His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI was marked with Pascal joy and the celebration of the Divine Services. Even though weather remained in the 20's for most of the trip, His Grace and entourage enjoyed walks on the island and visits with villagers and the village parish's Deacon Andronik Kashevarof, a survivor of the World War II internment camps. The parish also hosted a meal in the school gymnasium honoring His Grace's visit. For the first time in many years, St. George will be sending a seminarian to St. Herman Seminary in the fall.

When I accompanied His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI to Alaska five years ago, I had no idea what to expect. My expectations were not so important, because, honestly, I didn't think I would wind up staying. It was my assumption that as a vicar bishop, His Grace would fix things up in Alaska and we would go somewhere else. The blessing was, indeed, that I was wrong in my assumption. What I did not realize at the time was that I had come to become part of a greater family, which is the clergy, and people of the Alaska Diocese, a family that has welcomed me with open arms.



A time to gather as family...

We arrived on the first day of summer, the longest day of the year, to a crowded airport and a church for molieben followed by a barbecue. That evening went on and on – I got to know the clergy of the Anchorage area and their wives. Getting to know the clergy was wonderful but difficult. At once I faced a double difficulty – first, knowing which wife belonged to which priest and second, which name was the first name and which name was the last? Was it Fr. Andrew Jonah or Fr. Jonah Andrew? Was it Fr. Peter Chris or Fr. Chris Peter. I didn't know the difference between an Aleut and a Yupik Eskimo – to me it was all a blur that first day, and for days to come. As the evening went on, I recall growing more and more tired, but since I travel very well, I wasn't sure why. Then, I realized that the midnight sun had tricked me and it was already nearing midnight. Needless to say, for the first summer of my time in Alaska, I slept little and poorly.

My poor sleep wasn't, however, simply because of the midnight sun. His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI and I arrived to a Diocese in a mess. The Church offices had been ransacked – not even a stitch of stationary was left, so that I had to call the OCA to borrow stationary from them so that day-to-day business of the Diocese could be attended to. There was no mailing list; clergy files were missing or incomplete. The late Bishop INNOCENT had caused enormous problems among the clergy and day after day clergy came to visit His Grace and cry on his shoulder

and tell their stories to him. It was clear that a lot of healing was necessary. Although he had been told to leave the Diocese by means of assignment to a new See, Bishop INNOCENT lingered in Alaska, hiding much like some villain – always appearing when one wouldn't expect him and then disappearing again. He even would show up in my dreams now and then, dressed as a simple monk trying to offer me explanation as to why he couldn't reconcile himself to the church. I recall clergy going into absolute panic attacks because they had seen him here or there in town. They were that afraid of him. Even I had my encounter in a grocery store parking lot when he followed me around the parking lot in his car trying to intimidate me. I have to say I was afraid. Those early days carried a lot of insecurity.

In his ministry as a pastor, time and time again, I have seen Bishop NIKOLAI fix things. He has reconciled couples having marital troubles; he has counseled others with difficulty unto the resolution of their problems. The repair of souls and finding the solutions to problems has been, in the years I have known him, central to his understanding of his priestly ministry. It was this same pastoral sense that guided his dealings with the clergy. Even with Bishop INNOCENT, he tried again and again to make contact and find reconciliation for him but he would not. Despite those obstacles, we went to work – we traveled extensively and made good headway getting to know the clergy and the people.

By the time of the 9-11 attacks in 2001, I was beginning to have a feeling that the move would be permanent. What gave me this feeling? The first thing was my immediate comfort with the Old Calendar. When the Trade Center was

attacked, I recall thinking to myself, "What a shame that the Muslim radicals would attack the US on the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner." – Another was my immediate comfort with the clergy. In a few short months, I had clergy friends all over the diocese who called to talk to me, who invited His Grace and me over for meals whether it was to drop in or to celebrate some important family occasion. His Grace and I were important to the lives of these people. A Bishop (and of course myself by extension of having, at that time, been his deacon and secretary) was someone special in Alaska – someone to love, someone for whom it was important to care. I think this is why so many of them were hurt

by Bishop INNOCENT – because he did not love them to the degree which they loved him.



It is difficult, when asked, to reflect in a short space on five years of one's life in the church and the experience of that church during that period. One can see easily, that in an essay which should describe a period of five years, I have taken a bulk of it to describe only as many months. I think, however, that there is a reason for this. In the first months of our time here, we encountered a church that was hurting. The morale of the clergy was ruined, the matushki were fighting, and there was practically no money. The first few months showed me what the church in Alaska could not be. I think everyone in their ministry has some great examples by which he forms his attitudes and approaches. Everyone has a favorite priest or matushka they like to emulate. Everyone has one or two they do not. As for me, when I think of those days and I think of now, I feel a great sense of relief. The relief comes from seeing the wonderful things that God has brought to life in this Diocese over the last five years.

In five years God has transformed a diocese impoverished through neglect into a diocese replete with growth and progress. He has taken strife and discord among the clergy and their families and turned that into love and happy memories of one diocesan gathering after the next. It has been my joy to be part of that transformation and to find within it my own transformation as well. I meet people every day, who from their youth, had some sort of pull on their heartstrings for Alaska. They came here as soon as they had the opportunity, often leaving everything behind. Truthfully, I never had that yearning, but being here now, five years, I am grateful to God for His blessing my presence and ask Him to continue to bless my presence here as His will abides it.

Clergy Retreat 2006



FIVE YEARS OF OUTREACH & VISION IN ALASKA

Celebrating the Fifth Year Anniversary of His Grace The Right Reverend NIKOLAI, Bishop of Sitka, Anchorage & Alaska and Outreach Alaska by Mary Ann Khoury

Mission: Respond to the call of our fellow countrymen, heirs to the spiritual legacy of St. Innocent, as they struggle in America's Holy Land to preserve the Orthodox faith against the Evil One, treacherous weather and subsistence lifestyle.



Traditional Starring at the seminary apartments

The mission of Outreach Alaska was initiated in the summer of 1999 after my return to Kansas following nearly 2 months in areas of our Lord's Alaska Vineyard. My travels took me to a variety of locations: Eagle River, Anchorage, Wasilla, Eklutna, Bethel, Napaskiak, Kwethluk, Kasigluk, Kodiak, Old Harbor, and Sitka.

However, Outreach Alaska may be said to have begun during the prayers for the feast of the Repose of St. Herman of Alaska on December 13, 1998, when I was called by St. Herman to travel to Alaska and follow the path of the saints. On July 15, 1999, with the blessing, direction, and input from my bishop, Sayedna BASIL, in Wichita, Kansas, I boarded a plane for Anchorage to begin a trip without any plan, without any agenda, without any companion—just to be in this beautiful place where the saints baptized, married, communed and taught the Alaskan people, giving themselves to the Holy Orthodox Church. That trip



St. Julianna Married Student Pantry

and the vision that has grown from that time has changed my life forever.

The first year following that trip was a time of development. With leadership from Sayedna BASIL and the clergy in Kansas, the Outreach Alaska program was established and our fundraising projects focused on St. Sophia Russian Orthodox Church in Bethel. This small parish was in great need of finding a new location and building a

new church. Over the next two years, the projects of Outreach Alaska were established and supported by the Antiochian Orthodox Churches in Wichita. Even though this was an opportunity for all Orthodox in the Lower 48 to participate in the "New Alaska Mission," there had not been time to fully implement the projects.

In 2001 there was a turning point: Archimandrite Nikolai Soraich from Las Vegas was to be consecrated to the Holy Episcopacy and would be sent to the Alaska Vineyard. I had been introduced to Father Nikolai through a mutual acquaintance just 6 weeks before via email. Traveling to Dallas for his consecration on April 22, 2001, we arranged to meet and discuss various situations in Alaska, including the Outreach Alaska program that I had mailed to him for his review. With the blessing and support of Sayedna BASIL, I began to work closely with Vladyka NIKOLAI, and Outreach Alaska became an institution of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska (Orthodox Church in America), under His Grace's administration in 2001.

With support and encouragement from Vladyka NIKOLAI, Outreach Alaska—The New Alaska Mission has achieved many needs for the Mother Diocese and has worked hard with many jurisdictions to meet those needs. Without the understanding of His Grace for what this program would offer the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska, nothing would have been accomplished. Under his strong and dedicated leadership, this program has grown and is well known in many parts of our American Orthodox Vineyard. Changes have been made along the way. There is always need for change because there are always changing needs. I have found

Be sure to visit Outreach Alaska on the worldwide web at:

www.outreachalaska.org



working with His Grace that he is firm, forgiving, hospitable and kind. He has a wonderful sense of humor, but one does not want to be the item of his teasing! His Grace is very dedicated to our Lord and the assignment he has been given, but Vladyka would be this way with any task Our Lord would place before him.

Sometimes it has been difficult being half a continent away, in Wichita, Kansas. But Vladyka NIKOLAI has given me the freedom to move forward on the projects as I see fit and always has been available to discuss any subject that needs his input. The future challenges will be to bring in more jurisdictions to participate in our projects and increased travel to various dioceses. As soon as our existing projects are completed, it is my hope to develop an "Outreach Alaska Ambassador project" that will provide a stable financial base and dedicated leadership to further this program's mission.

Thanks be to God! Outreach Alaska has grown and made a difference. But it never would have happened without His Grace's love of the Alaska Vineyard and his patient understanding of this undeserving servant. It has been a blessing to be a part of His Grace's work in Alaska. Thank you, Vladyka, for trusting in me these past 5 years, in spite of my unworthiness. Many years, O Master!

The screenshot shows a website page titled "ADOPT A SEMINARIAN" for St. Herman Theological Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska. The page includes a navigation menu on the left with items like "Home", "Adopt a Seminarian", "St. Eusebius of Alaska Missionary Prayer Society", "Spiritual Travel", "Baker Parish Program", "Alaska 2004", "Our Story", "How You Can Help", "History of Orthodoxy in America", "Lives of the Saints", and "Contact Us". The main content area features a header with the Outreach Alaska logo and a list of bullet points detailing how parishes, groups, and individuals can sponsor seminarians. It also lists responsibilities for seminarians and sponsors, such as providing pictures, working in partnership with the coordinator, and providing financial support. A sidebar on the right contains a quote: "Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." (Psalm 34:12)

A LOOK BACK TOWARD THE FUTURE



SPRING 2002



Kansas Churches purchased and collected new linens for the seminary. They were shipped from Wichita to Kodiak. Arrangements were made with the Wal-Mart in Kodiak for purchase of new items with the donations collected for the project. These items were picked up at Wal-Mart by seminary staff. An entire list of items requested by the seminary including pillows, blankets, sheets, bathroom linens, etc was supplied by this project.

SPRING 2003



The first graduating class sponsored by the Adopt a Seminarian project. Since 2003 thru the 2006 graduating class, 27 parish and individual sponsors from various jurisdictions have participated to help support 13 seminarians for the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska while attending St. Herman Theological Seminary in Kodiak.

SUMMER 2004 LIBRARY PHASE I

Phase I of the St. Herman Theological Seminary Library Project begins. First shipment of new books arrived at the seminary from Ss Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. This phase was completed in January 2005, when more contributions were received for the purchase of a "Title List" provided by Archpriest Chad Hatfield.

SUMMER 2005 LIBRARY PHASE II



Major donations were received to complete this phase to purchase new furnishings for the library, computer lab, and adjacent classrooms. While in Kodiak for the 2005 SHS commencements, invoices for the new library, computer lab, and adjacent classroom tables and chairs was paid by Outreach Alaska. In addition, other new furnishings were purchased and delivered providing a small group study area within the library.

2005 CHURCH SCHOOL PROGRAM



Amelia Savinova accepted a request from Father George Berezkin of St. Sophia Russian Orthodox Church in Bethel, Alaska (a remote community on the Kuskokwim River) to develop a Church School program for the parish's youth and be the Church School Coordinator. Training for Amelia was arranged by Carol Buleza, Director of the Antiochian

Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Christian Education. This was coordinated with Matushka Myra Kovalak of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC). Amelia was trained in South Carolina by Khouria Betty Randolph and assisted by Father David Randolph. Materials were purchased including the IOCC Prayer Journal and the Church School Program for St. Sophia opened in September 2005. This is the first Church School Program for St. Sophia's youth and has been supported by the parents and grand parents of the youth attending. Class time follows Sunday Divine Liturgy and the family provides refreshments for the children. Most of the adults stay. They are finding that there

they also can learn about their faith and are interested in knowing more. Amelia will be provided additional training and - God willing - will be able to help with others in remote Alaska communities to develop Church School Programs where they have never been before. Sponsors for the St. Sophia Church School Program in Bethel were Father Gary Breton and Matushka Mary Buleza of Annunciation Church in Brick, NJ.



GETTING THE WORD OUT...

For the past 5 years a great deal of travel has been needed in order to educate people in all jurisdictions about Outreach Alaska mission. Through these efforts and contacts, the funds have been raised to support all of our projects and individuals from all over the country have grown in their awareness of Holy Orthodoxy in Alaska and America. None of this travel would have been possible without the support and encouragement of His Grace. We look forward to many more travels and workshops over the upcoming years.

Conferences

Workshops

Presentations



with the blessings of His Grace, I plan to travel to Kodiak for the blessing of the new Library. At that time a plaque - furnished by Outreach Alaska, will be placed on the wall inscribed with the names of all those who contributed to this project. St. Juliana Food Pantry - This was a new project for the seminary - especially designed to meet the emergency needs of all seminarians and their families. All funds have been raised for the beginning of this project in June 2006. It should be competed very soon. A credit account has been established with the Kodiak Safeway through Outreach Alaska for seminary staff to stock the food pantry whenever needed. Come and See Icons is donating an icon of St. Juliana of Lazareno for the pantry and the seminary staff is compiling her life story to be hung with the icon. The invoices will be paid for by Outreach Alaska through general and specific donations for this project. Any persons or parishes interested in assisting with the stocking of the St. Juliana Food Pantry, please contact Mary Ann

2005 OUTREACH ALASKA WEBSITE

A stand alone website was completed and went live for Orthodox Alaska. This was blessed by His Grace and is maintained by our Outreach Alaska webmaster, Dee Dunlap, in Wichita, KS. All has been donated for furtherance of our mission to Holy Orthodoxy in Alaska. Several items will be updated over the summer - so keep looking for updates, etc. at www.outreachalaska.org

2006 ST. INNOCENT OF ALASKA MISSIONARY PRAYER SOCIETY

We have received 3 new members to this commitment of weekly prayer by way of our website. This brings us to a total of 83 individuals praying for our Alaska Vineyard from various jurisdictions throughout our country. This year I shared with His Grace that a young Orthodox man who works for me in Wichita had asked to help me with the Outreach Alaska work. Vladyka was supportive of my having some help and I told him that I really would like to focus more on the St. Innocent of Alaska Missionary Prayer Society. Christopher Tompkins will take on this project and we plan to develop a small newsletter to our members. I expect this to become a more visible project and know that it will be the basis for all that will be accomplished in the future - as it has been in the past.

2006 ALASKA 2094 PROJECTS

SHS Library Project Phase III - All contributions needed to finalize this project have been raised and we are scheduled for completion by the end of August 2006. New carpet and additional furnishings have been ordered and walls will be freshly painted. In September, by God's Will and

Khoury, Coordinator of Outreach Alaska at maktoob@cox.net or call at 316-832-0734. This will be an ongoing project and donations will always be appreciated.

2006 ST. SOPHIA BUILDING FUND

St. Sophia Russian Orthodox Church in Bethel, Alaska, Building Fund - This year the first parish was placed for providing ongoing financial donations



to this bush community for the building of the first Cathedral parish "bush" Alaska. Located at the mouth of the Kuskokwim River as it opens into the Bering Sea, Bethel is a remote and isolated feeder community for over 50 villages in the Kuskokwim/Yukon Rivers Region. The major grocery shopping, hospital and other medical care, jail, banks, etc is located in Bethel. It is essential that Holy Orthodoxy has a strong presence here and with the help of parishes in the lower 48 who want to be a part of the building of America's Holy Land - this will be a spiritually fulfilling project. His Grace has acquired the land in Bethel for this new vision and the small church community of St. Sophia is very committed and energized to see this come to fruition. This will be an ongoing project and will take several years - but with prayer and love - we will accomplish all according to God's Will.



ALASKA 2094 ~ A NEW CENTURY

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SAINT YAKOV CENTER ~ A PLACE TO REFLECT & GROW

Varvara Nikolaevna (Barbara) Sediakina-Larson



The St. Yakov Center for Orthodox Christian Learning is located on the outskirts of Soldotna, about eight miles from the city limits of the city of Kenai. As one swings off the Kenai Spur Highway into the driveway, where a wooden sign points the way (a gift of Priest Michael Trefon while on assignment to the Kenai Church), one finds oneself immediately in a forest of spruce and birch trees shading the approach to the front door of the building that houses the Center. To the right of the building stands a Russian Orthodox Cross.

Having been called to serve our Lord as a missionary in Russia and, subsequently, in the Bristol Bay Region of Alaska from King Salmon to False Pass, I found myself led to the Kenai Peninsula five years ago with the thought for a Center for Orthodox Christian Learning.

...I asked a group of young people how many of them were Christians. At one hand went up among the 20 who were present. When I followed by asking how many were Orthodox, almost everyone raised their hands. The reason for this was that the newly arrived Protestant minister preached that one had to attend his church in order to be a Christian...

The St. Yakov Center for Orthodox Christian Learning was named for St. Yakov Netsvetov, the first native priest of Alaska. He was the son of an employee of the Russian-American Company from Tobolsk who married a Unangan Aleut from Atka. His father made sure he had an excellent education to prepare him for entrance to the seminary in Irkutsk, where he was tonsured as a reader; married his wife, Anna; became a deacon; and was ordained to the priesthood in 1828. Soon after, he was assigned to his home parish at Atka. This made him the first native-born priest to serve in Alaska. But that is not the reason the Center was named for him. In reading his 2-volume diary, one can see that he was a faithful disciple of His Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His daily life of service emphasized the need for the Church to continue to nurture and educate newly baptized individuals. Their introduction to the fundamentals of the Church—the continued nurturing and deepening of their faith through ongoing education—was vital. St.

Yakov assisted St. Innocent with translations of the Scriptures and other texts into the languages of the area; he built schools and taught the young people in Russian and Aleut. He set up his tent wherever he traveled, served the Liturgy and worshiped with the people. As teacher, pastor, iconographer, scholar and physician, he served everyone God sent to him. He expressed and radiated the love of Christ and preached the Good News to everyone with whom he came in contact. As I found out more about St. Yakov, I prayed that I could be as faithful and as longsuffering; that the Lord would grant me perseverance as His witness.

Upon my return from Russia to Alaska, I discovered the need to try to continue what St. Yakov began. The Orthodox faithful in Alaska have

always struggled to have their faith nurtured. Many are continuing to leave our Orthodox Church because they lack the knowledge of what we believe and do not know how to express its Truth to others. Their children are attending a variety of Sunday Schools run by

various Protestant denominations and Roman Catholics because, in many areas, we do not offer them an alternative. Once, while visiting the village of King Cove, I asked a group of young people how many of them were Christians. Not one hand went up among the 20 who were present. When I followed by asking how many were Orthodox, almost everyone raised their hands. The reason for this was that the newly arrived Protestant minister preached that one had to attend *his* church in order to be a Christian; leading those who were baptized in the Orthodox Church, yet uneducated in their faith, to believe they weren't even christian!

For the past five years I have worshiped in Kenai, Niniichik, Homer and Anchorage. During this time I have been made aware of the increased need for the Church to provide a quiet, restful place where the people can come together for learning and discussion and to hear from a variety of Orthodox Christian representatives on a variety of spiritual subjects

so their faith may be strengthened. There is a need for another Orthodox Church in Soldotna with a bell—not only to announce our existence but also to make known our desire to serve the diverse population of the Kenai Peninsula, calling and drawing all people to prayer. Language classes could be offered so the priests who serve the liturgy can become more acquainted with the Russian Church Slavonic of their heritage. Music retreats for choir members and their directors would greatly

benefit our Alaska congregations by allowing the beauty of our liturgical choral pieces to shine forth and inspire those who hear them. Young families could come together to learn from the Scriptures and from the writings of our Holy Fathers. New mothers could come together with their infants to receive instruction in Orthodox Christian parenthood. Our youth could benefit

from a graded camp program in both summer and winter months. We cannot afford to remain silent as we watch the continued decline in attendance in our Orthodox churches.

Last June, the daughter of the original homesteader of the land on which the Center now stands came for a visit from Texas. She offered to sell me more land, which she inherited from her father upon his death. Escrow was opened with a \$500 good faith deposit, and we were given until August 1, 2006, to finalize the option costing \$50,000. Payment of this sum will increase the holdings of the St. Yakov Center for Orthodox Christian Learning to a total of 17 acres, with a pond where summer campers can swim. (An additional 1.44 acres already was purchased 2 years ago.) The addition of this land would encourage us to continue to pray and to dream of beginning an Orthodox Christian school, a skete or monastery and to gather our people together as a team to witness to our Russian Orthodox Christian heritage begun so long ago. It is imperative for the population of the Kenai Peninsula to know that the Russian Orthodox Church does not only belong to history. We must become more visible and more accessible. We must show the people around us that we are alive and well in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we all desire to continue learn of Him and to worship Him as our Lord and Savior.



Clergy receive gramotas on behalf of their parish for hosting the Sitka Mother of God Icon

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF ALASKA

S AINT HERMAN OF ALASKA ANNUAL VIGIL CANDLES

EVEN IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO ST. HERMAN'S HOLY RELICS AND VISIT SPRUCE ISLAND, YOU CAN STILL SPONSOR AN ANNUAL VIGIL CANDLE. FOR A DONATION OF \$500.00 A CANDLE WILL REMAIN LIT BEFORE ST. HERMAN'S HOLY RELICS FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR. FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SEND NAMES THAT YOU WANT COMMEMORATED WEEKLY AT THE RELIQUARY CONTACT FATHER INNOCENT AT:

HOLY RESURRECTION CATHEDRAL
ATTN: FATHER INNOCENT
PO Box 55
KODIAK AK 99615
(907) 486-3854



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MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 2006

6:00PM - AKATHIST & BISHOP'S TEA
HOLY RESURRECTION CATHEDRAL - KODIAK

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2006

8:00AM - DEPART FOR SPRUCE ISLAND
KODIAK HARBOR
9:00AM - HIERARCHICAL DIVINE LITURGY
Ss. SERGIUS & HERMAN OF VALAAM CHURCH - SPRUCE IS.
6:00PM - HIERARCHICAL VIGIL
HOLY RESURRECTION CATHEDRAL - KODIAK

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2006

9:00AM - HIERARCHICAL DIVINE LITURGY
HOLY RESURRECTION CATHEDRAL - KODIAK
11:30AM - GRAND BANQUET
KODIAK HIGH SCHOOL COMMONS

