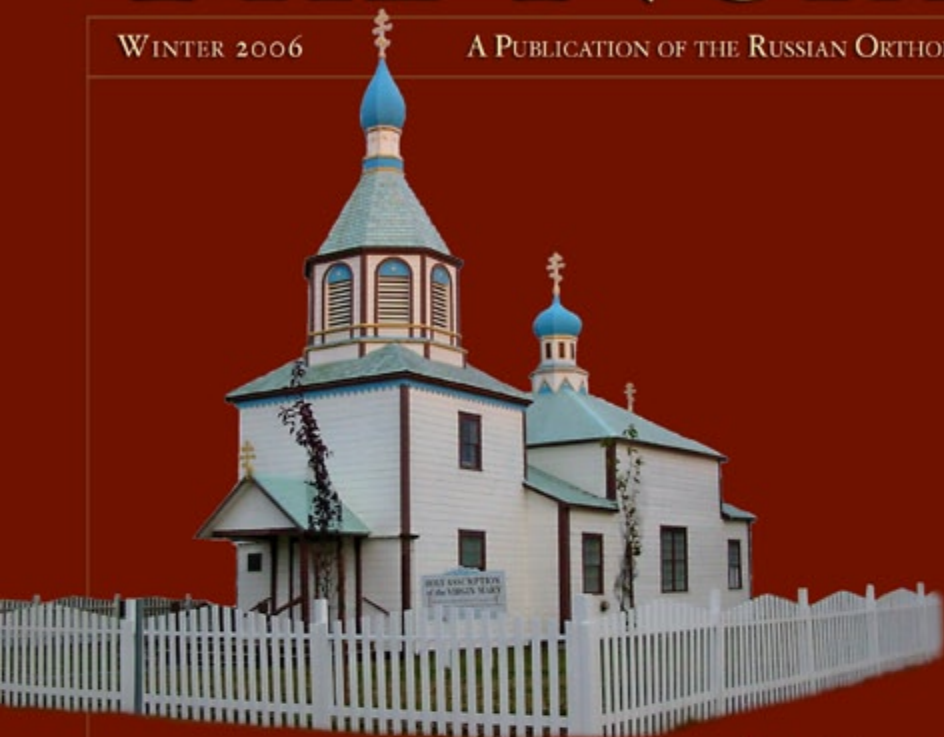


THE NORTH STAR

WINTER 2006

A PUBLICATION OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF ALASKA

VOLUME 5



A PILGRIM'S JOURNAL

ST. PETER THE ALEUT YOUTH CAMP

LABORING TOGETHER IN THIS NORTHERN VINEYARD

CELEBRATING
5
YEARS OF RENEWAL



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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Newly ordained Priest Leonty, Matushka Katherine & their daughter with His Grace in Kasigaluk

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In the Life of the Church

ORDINATIONS

PRIEST LEONTY JOHNSON
TO THE HOLY DIACONATE AUGUST 1, 2006
TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD AUGUST 2, 2006

HIERODEACON PANTELEIMON
TO THE HOLY DIACONATE NOVEMBER 12, 2006

MITERED PRIEST
ARCHIMANDRITE ISIDORE NOVEMBER 12, 2006

DOUBLE ORARION
DEACON JOHN LARSON AUGUST 20, 2006
DEACON JAMES GUST OCTOBER 21, 2006
HIERODEACON PANTELEIMON NOVEMBER 12, 2006

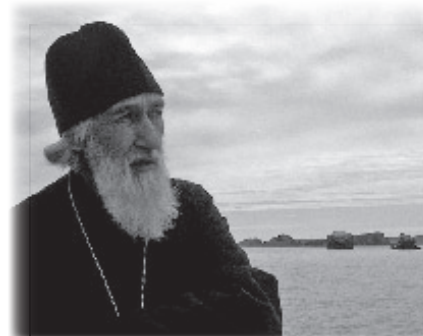
TONSURED
MONK PANTELEIMON NOVEMBER 7, 2006

MEMORY ETERNAL
MATUSHKA SOPHIA GUST MARCH 13, 2006



On the cover:
Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary ~ Kenai, Alaska . Established in the early 1840's, the first church was built in 1849. The current structure was completed in 1895 and is listed as a National Historic Landmark.

A PRAYERFUL VISION OF GROWTH & EXPECTATION



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

The following address was delivered by His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI at the opening of the 2006 Diocesan Assembly on Monday, November 13th.

Dearly Beloved in Christ—Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Matushki, Delegates, Observers and the Faithful of this God Protected Diocese of Alaska



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Five years ago today, November 13, 2001 Bishop TIKHON of the West and I were sitting together in the IHOP (International House of Pancakes) restaurant in Syosset. It was the night before the special session of the Holy Synod convened to elect a ruling bishop for Alaska. I had been in Alaska for nearly four months and had visited most of the regions in our Diocese. Some of those places were dusty, some were muddy, some had no running water and most had mosquitoes big enough to suck your last drop of blood! Bishop TIKHON looked at me seriously and said, "You know, Alaska is the place that gives dignity to The Orthodox Church in America." My first reaction was to laugh. But, by the look on his face, I paused, realizing, he wasn't thinking about dusty streets and hungry mosquitoes, but about history and legacy. During the past five years I have come to recognize the truth in his observation. Alaska is our Mother Diocese. She represents the beginnings of Orthodoxy in North America for every Orthodox Christian. We have the awesome responsibility of maintaining Her integrity to be what God intended. This responsibility is in our hands and we will do it, God help us! Wouldn't it be wonderful if more of our own people in America made pilgrimages to Alaska and venerated the relics of our St. Herman? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the knowledge of life here in this Diocese—the largest church in the State—was better known? Where else in America can it be said that the Orthodox Church is the largest church? But let us not forget that history and size mean nothing without continual hard work and sacrifice. This is the commitment our Lord calls us to make.

I want to thank a few people in particular. One is my Chancellor, Archimandrite Isidore who represents me on the line with all of you and who hardly needs any accolades or would want them, Minadora Jacobs, my assistant whose tireless efforts on my behalf and daily in the running of A Street, the Archpriest Chad Hatfield for his tireless leadership and dedication to the training of our students and integrity he brings to the Seminary, the deans in showing example by their leadership, the clergy who strive to be obedient in doing God's will in a secular world and our faithful who follow the Lord's direction through example and love.

What does hard work and sacrifice mean for us today, more than 200 years since those first missionaries arrived in Kodiak? We know that in order to accomplish anything worthwhile, we must have the necessary tools. For us, as Orthodox Christians, that means the spiritual tools, which the Church provides. We have gathered here at this Assembly as representatives of the God Protected Diocese of Alaska. We give thanks to Almighty God for His protection and for the intercession of His Holy Mother and all the saints who watch over our people.

One of the spiritual tools most readily available to each of us is our Christian name. As your Bishop, I ask you to remain firm in your resolve to use the names you and your children were given at Holy Baptism. Why would we ask the saint whose name we bear to hear us only once a week in Church when we can call on them daily to intercede for us? Let us strive to dispense with the secular names and rely on our saints to guide us each and every day. Remember my dear ones, the evil one works 24/7 and we need this protection.

St. Innocent wrote that there were some things that he felt had not been accomplished during his time in Alaska. He said that alcoholism and those living together outside Holy Matrimony were his foremost concerns. My dear faithful these are still problems and we have begun to address them. Our partnership with South Central Foundation has been a start and may that relationship grow and become even stronger for the well-being and health of our people and communities. Our seminarians are getting the proper training and certification in the communities they will serve. As our church life becomes our focus and the center of our lives we will render these obstacles less powerful, day-by-day.

I am so grateful for the number of requests I receive continually from couples wanting to have their unions blessed. We are making



a difference but we have to persevere in sacrament of Baptism because their child to have a proper home in the the rest of us toward salvation.

Another spiritual tool the Church services. It is to reverently venerate the service begins. It is equally the priest intones, "Blessed is likened that announcement when the watchman calls out, that even better when we are the airport. When they announce waiting and excited to enter. The place and we should eagerly be awaiting a weekly journey to the Kingdom of Heaven encounter the Living Christ. Who would be late for Liturgy, not for us to come and go according to whim, but to stand and be present, praying and vigilant until we meet our Risen Lord.



His direction. We would never deny a child the parents are not married. But we want every eyes of God, struggling right along with

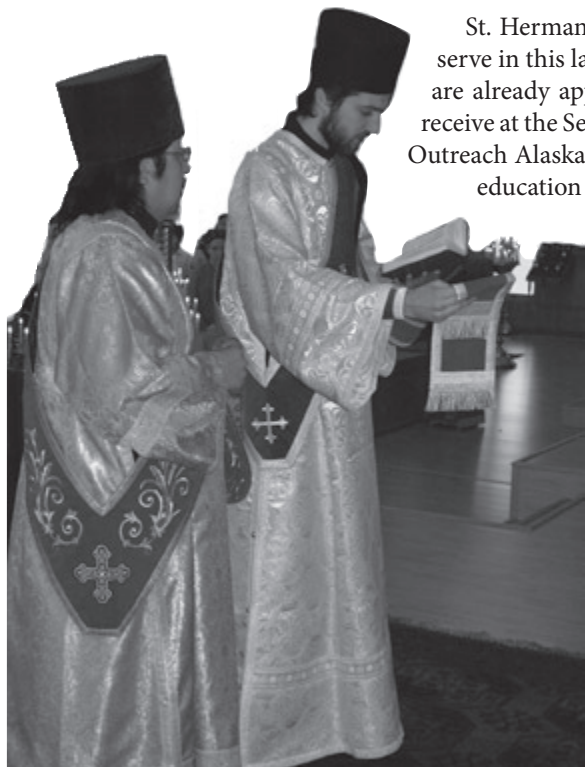
is arriving in a timely manner to important that we take the time icons of our saints before the important to be present the moment the Kingdom..." One theologian to the beginning of a train journey "All Aboard!" But we can relate to traveling in a village or in the cities at the plane is boarding we are there ready Church should be an even more exciting that beginning prayer. Our Divine Liturgy is where ultimately, through the Holy Eucharist we such a journey? The Holy Fathers structured the Divine

Through Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving (PFA) we acquire the spiritual tools to accomplish the hard work and to make the sacrifices which the Scriptures quite clearly direct. Have you given your Permanent Fund Dividend tithe to the Church? Have you reminded your spiritual children of this Scriptural directive? We know that when we return to God what he has first given us, only then can our lives be truly blessed.

So, let us remember to use our Christian names, to arrive at the services on time and to maintain the standard of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. Let us encourage our loved ones to have their unions blessed and to pray in particular for those struggling with substance abuse. A strong spiritual life provides us with the necessary tools to build up the Church in our Diocese and it gives us the strength to bear the sacrifices.

I am reminded that our spiritual forefathers promoted education, built churches, a seminary, and orphanages here in Alaska. They had far less material and technological means than we have today. Certainly there was no Permanent Fund Dividend. Yet they persevered and we must do the same.

I would like to share some observations with you now on the progress in the Diocese and my prayer and vision for the near future.



St. Herman Seminary provides the life-blood in our Diocese, training men and women to serve in this land. We are blessed that the Seminary is thriving and that there are students who are already applying for admission next year. We deeply appreciate the financial support we receive at the Seminary from around the world, through private donations and organizations like Outreach Alaska and Ilaasi. But, we must rely on our own people, here in Alaska, to pay for the education of our clergy. It is time for us to commit ourselves to financially supporting our seminary, just as we resolved three years ago to tithe to The Orthodox Church in America.

Last month we launched a new program to train deacons to serve in the Diocese. We would like to replicate this program in Bethel where students from that part of the Diocese can participate in this training without having to travel great distances. This program does not diminish the work of the seminary; rather, it enhances the seminary education.

Today we have 40 active priests in the Diocese, 5 retired and as of yesterday by God's Grace 12 deacons. There have never been more clergy in the history of this Diocese. We have read that at St. Yakov's funeral there were some fifty clergy in attendance. Although this is a remarkable fact, they were not only ordained priests and deacons but readers as well were included in that number.

This last week, on the Feast of St. Demetrius, the Great Martyr, young Paul Erickson died and was given a new life as the Stavrophor monk Panteleimon.

And yesterday he was ordained to the Holy Diaconate. Monasticism is what brought Orthodoxy here and it is that mission of a hermitage on Spruce Island that we pray in the Akathist every week. With this in mind a plan for the Hermitage that we pray to build on Spruce Island has been drawn up.

We hope to bless the ground for the new monastic building at Eklutna this coming May 22nd on the Feast for the Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas. The structure is inspired by plans that I saw while visiting Serbia last year. My friend Bishop Grigorije and I visited the site where this building was in progress. I asked him whether it would have nuns or monks and he looked at me and said, "Whatever God blesses." May He bless our efforts in Eklutna.

We intend to transform our modest Russian Orthodox Museum in downtown Anchorage (6th and A St.) into a prominent center for the Diocese. Inspired by the Old Russian Bishop's House in Sitka, this building will allow us to expand our museum, the gift shop and Cupola Coffee shop. The Diocesan archives will be transferred here so that scholars may access them more readily and where a full-time staff will care for them. The Diocesan offices will also be in this complex as well as a chapel. It is important that everyone sees that we are a Church that is alive and that our Church is at the center of our lives.

Many of you are faithful Distinguished Diocesan Donors. We have a plan to refocus our direction with this worthy program and to designate our 3-D monies for a specific project. It was decided at the Diocesan Council Meeting yesterday that we would direct these funds to paying off the mortgage on our downtown property at A Street. Our 3-D members will receive statements on the progress of this debt reduction and know that when we achieve our goal, the establishment of the Diocesan complex will become possible. As with everything we do in the Diocese there are no secrets about what we do and how we spend our resources.

Thanks be to God that our communities are transforming the church buildings inside and out to be appropriate temples of worship.



You can witness this throughout the Diocese. It seems to me that Napaskiak started this major transformation. Now it is in evidence in every region of the Diocese and dozens of churches.

ROSSIA (Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska) is active in providing matching grants for communities to do work that they might not be able to do alone. St. Sergius Church in Chuathbaluk on the Kuskokwim, Holy Assumption in Kenai, St. Nicholas in Juneau and Holy Ascension in Karluk have been approved. Only those churches that are historic are eligible to receive these ROSSIA funds.

From what I have described today, I hope you have a sense of the direction I envision for our Diocese. With God's help we will continue to embrace the dignity, Bishop TIKHON so aptly reminded me of on the eve of my election, and build on the legacy which we inherited. We will continue to reach out to the broader Orthodox community.

Our own Kazan Icon, the Wonderworking Icon of the Sitka Mother of God, made an extraordinary Pilgrimage last year to almost 100 locations nationally. Recently, His Grace, Bishop ALEJO of Mexico City presented me with a formal request at the Holy Synod asking if the Icon could travel to Mexico and if this could happen as soon as possible. Plans are currently underway for this Pilgrimage possible in April and when Canada makes the same request the entire territory of The Orthodox Church in America will have been blessed by her visit. We have many other holy objects but our greatest treasure is the Faith which was given to us through sacrifice and hard work beginning with that long sacrificial trip of love from Russia in 1793 and continuing until this very moment.

All these physical changes occurring throughout the Diocese are important. That our Churches are the most beautiful buildings in the villages and cities is an encouragement to us and an inspiration to others. Sharing our Holy treasures on Pilgrimage and in the Museum brings countless blessings and provides knowledge about the Orthodox faith to a wider community. But the most essential transformations must occur within each of us. We must become better Orthodox Christians and that can only happen if we are willing to submit ourselves to the will of Jesus Christ, to use the spiritual tools the Church provides and to live the life He has given us through the holy saints, many of whom walked this very land.

I give thanks for each and every one of you. I thank you for your prayers, your support and hard work. May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ continue to bless this beautiful and God Protected Diocese.

+ Bishop Nikolai





St. Peter the Aleut Camp, Ouzinkie Alaska

MIRACLES ABOUND!

OCMC Teams Serving in Alaska
Very Rev. Michael Abdelahad

THE PLANNING

The purpose of the OCMC mission team to Alaska was two-fold. First, they traveled

to Alaska as the Staff and Counselors of a Youth Camp that would be held in the Village of Ouzinkie, located on Spruce Island, the island where St. Herman of Alaska labored. Second, they traveled as Pilgrims, with the intention of participating in the St. Herman Pilgrimage that is held annually on Spruce Island and Kodiak. As is the case with "missionary" activity, they were unaware of the many positive changes that this trip would make in their lives. The response to this Mission Trip was so positive that two distinct programs were organized in conjunction with St. Herman Seminary and the Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Kodiak. It was decided that one OCMC Team would run a Vacation Bible School in Kodiak, while a second Team would organize and staff a Summer Camp (5 days and 4 nights) for Teens. This article will focus on the work, and experiences, of the Summer Camp Team.

ARRIVAL IN ALASKA

By July 31st, everyone had arrived in Alaska, the "Holy Land of North America" and the members of the two OCMC Teams met for the first time. The members of the Summer Camp Team were the V. Rev. Michael Abdelahad (Clergy Team Leader), Joan Farha (Camp

Director), Daniel Belonick (Christian Education), Robyn Haas (Arts & Crafts), Zak Katsilas (Sports Programming), Elizabeth Nichols (Evening Program) and Betty Sellas (Meals & Snacks). With the addition of Anastasia Nicolai from St. Herman Seminary, the Team was now complete. Much to our delight, we also discovered that there was an OCF group from the University of Connecticut that was present to help prepare the Seminary, the Cathedral and various parts of Spruce Island for the upcoming Pilgrimage. Part of the Summer Camp Team went to Holy Resurrection Cathedral where we saw St. Herman's reliquary for the first

time. Those who were present venerated St. Herman's Blessing Cross and were anointed with oil from the Vigil Lamp that hangs above his reliquary. We then went to the top of Pillar Mountain, the mountain that St. Herman climbed when he was being expelled from Kodiak. It was from this vantage point that St. Herman saw Spruce Island for the first time, and decided to relocate there.

YOUTH CAMP

We planned to accommodate 28 Teens from Kodiak and Ouzinkie for the 5 day camp. When we arrived on shore, we had 11 campers...9 from Kodiak and 2 from Ouzinkie. Word began to spread...about the Camp; the beautiful blue "I Believe" t-shirts (that the kids wore everywhere); learning to tie knots for a prayer rope; learning about Orthodoxy and discovering that it was "cool"; praying



Having fun: campers in Ouzinkie

On Tuesday, August 1st, Fr. Chad Hatfield, Dean of St. Herman Seminary in Kodiak, gave a very enlightening orientation talk to the two OCMC Teams, beginning with the history of Orthodoxy in Alaska and concluding with some of the things that we could expect to encounter during our stay. After the orientation, the two Teams met separately to continue planning their components of the Mission Trip. The remainder of the afternoon was spent purchasing the supplies for the Camp and then going, by boat, to the Village of Ouzinkie on Spruce Island.



Alutiiq Dancing with Traditional Dress

and discovering and singing together. So the kids came... and came... and came.



Alexandra Thomsen & Elizabeth Dresdow enjoy a feast!

Our plans for 28 Teens turned into 41 kids from age 5 and up who became a part of Camp St. Peter the Aleut. The Ouzinkie School has 36 enrolled students; 31 of them came to Camp St. Peter the Aleut. Teens who were reluctant to tell us three things about themselves at the beginning of the Camp were smiling and singing praises to God by the end of the Camp. Differentiating between the Kodiak kids and Ouzinkie kids was impossible. We were one Camp. Miracles abounded!

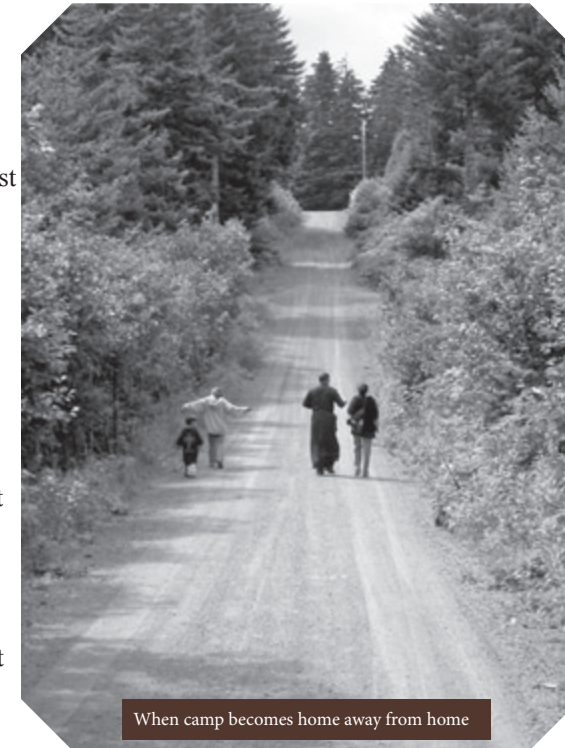
On Thursday we went to the Church of the Nativity and prayed the Akathist to St. Herman of Alaska. Later on, the people of the Village remarked that they heard voices that they had never heard before. They were convinced that the Angels sang with us. We invited the whole village of Ouzinkie to share dinner with us on Friday evening and brunch on Saturday morning. Friday's Evening Program was the Ouzinkie equivalent of "Skit Night." The Campers sang the hymns and songs that they learned, the Counselors and Campers chanted additional hymns, but the highlight was the Alutiiq dancing that was performed by the Campers in authentic, native costumes. After Liturgy and Brunch on Saturday, we packed the boats said our bittersweet good byes and headed back to Kodiak.

PILGRIMAGE

Our return to Kodiak on Saturday, August 5th we attended Vigil at Holy Resurrection Cathedral. His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI presided and we were blessed to meet him for the first time. After Sunday's Hierarchical Divine Liturgy we went to Fort Abercrombie State Park, which was located on a high bluff, overlooking the water. It was a beautiful place for sightseeing and whale

watching. We saw some Humpback and Gray whales, mostly feeding, but then two whales started to breach off in the distance. They were also rolling on their sides

and slapping the water with their fins. We stayed there for a couple of hours and then we returned to St. Herman Seminary to meet with His Grace. At our meeting, His Grace spoke about the condition of the Diocese and what to expect during the Pilgrimage. At Monday evening's Akathist and Tuesday evening's Vigil, we were blessed to be able to venerate



When camp becomes home away from home

the relics of Blessed Father Herman of Alaska and to be anointed with oil by the Bishops. At each of these Services, we were uplifted by the fragrant smell of myrrh that emanated from the reliquary, even before it was opened! It is difficult to explain, but you actually felt like you were being enveloped by the fragrance. A second example of the miraculous happened as the faithful were being anointed at the conclusion of Monday's Akathist. A member of our Team remarked that the faces of the people in the Cathedral seemed to

have "changed" somehow after they had venerated the relics and been anointed with the oil. Perhaps it was a foretaste of the Heavenly Kingdom that provided us with a better understanding of how the Disciples could be with Jesus, after the Resurrection, and only recognize Him in the breaking of the bread. A third example of the miraculous occurred during Liturgy on Spruce Island on Tuesday morning. As we arrived on Spruce Island, we were told to be mindful of how "still" the island was. Although completely covered with vegetation and home to many native species of birds and animals, there was almost no sound as we walked to the Chapel. By the time Bishop NIKOLAI gave his sermon at the end of Liturgy, the island was completely silent. It was as if everything on the island had stopped to listen. Our words truly fall short of describing the amazing, wondrous and miraculous events of this brief entrance into the world of missionary activity. All of us who were part of this Mission Trip returned home with the knowledge that we were not the same people that we were prior to departure. In addition to individual and collective spiritual growth, we returned to the "lower 48" with new associations and friendships that will last forever. We are grateful to our Hierarchs for giving us their blessing to make this journey. We are thankful for this trip, and eternally grateful to our hosts - His Grace, Bishop NIKOLAI, Bishop of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska, V. Rev. Chad Hatfield, Dean of St. Herman Seminary and Rev. Innocent Dresdow, Pastor of Holy Resurrection Cathedral

– for their very gracious hospitality. May God grant them many years! Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Herman of Alaska and Peter the Aleut, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us!



5th Anniversary



Great food & family time



PLANS FOR A
MONASTERY IN EKLUTNA

Clergy & delegates gathered in Anchorage on Nov. 11th-14th to celebrate Vladyka NIKOLAI's 5th anniversary as ruling bishop of the Diocese of Alaska and to meet for our annual diocesan assembly. Special elevations included Archimandrite Isidore being awarded the Miter and Monk Panteleimon being ordained to the Diaconate and awarded the double orarion. Orin Daniel Seybert was awarded the highest order of the St. Herman of Alaska medal for his continual generosity shown towards the diocese in allowing Vladyka to travel on Pen Air free of charge with no restrictions and to offer the same unrestricted tickets to the clergy for half-price.

Growth in the diocese was a central theme and to that end, plans were displayed to the assembly detailing a monastery in Eklutna, a redesign of the museum building in downtown Anchorage and a newly enclosed bell tower at St. Innocent Cathedral that would allow better handicap access than is presently available. These plans were noted to be an extension of efforts taking place all throughout the diocese to renovate and restore the church buildings and rectories. It was noted that the churches should be the nicest and cleanest buildings in our villages and cities.

The assembly also included educational sessions conducted by Archpriest Chad Hatfield, Dean of Saint Herman Seminary. Topics included, parish financial accountability and disclosure and preparing young couples for marriage, and sexual misconduct awareness and practical steps to protect not only our children but also clergy and lay leaders who work with our children in the church. How to screen volunteers and basic awareness training were offered.

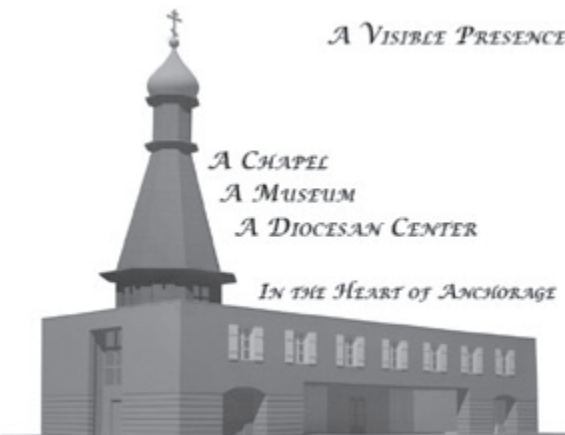
Time for fellowship was abundant and the richness of the divine services nourishing. It was a time to renew our vision and look with anticipation towards what God has in store for us as we labor in this northernmost vineyard. As we do so, Vladyka reminded us to never waiver in our commitment to Christ through Prayer, Fasting & Almsgiving. †

Abundant Growth

A VISIBLE PRESENCE

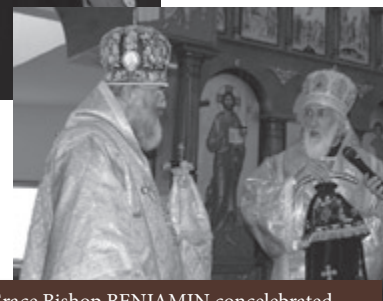
A CHAPEL
A MUSEUM
A DIOCESAN CENTER

IN THE HEART OF ANCHORAGE



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

GO THEREFORE & MAKE DISCIPLES



His Grace Bishop BENJAMIN concelebrated with His Grace at Sunday's Divine Liturgy

SUPPORT FOR SHS

The assembly unanimously passed a resolution stating that each parish will give \$1000.00 annually to St. Herman Seminary. Our seminarians are provided a free education and room and board if they make the commitment to serve in this diocese after their graduation. This is a gift that bears much fruit for our communities, but one that requires sacrifice. With one voice, we made the commitment to make that sacrifice!



Tickets
\$250 per person / \$2,000 table for 8
Available at the Russian Orthodox Museum
605 A St., Anchorage, 276-7257

The Raising of the Bell Tower

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO
JOIN FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS
FROM ACROSS ALASKA TO HELP FUND
THE RENOVATION OF THE BELL TOWER.

Thursday, January 11, 2007

5:30 — 6:30 PM
Enjoy Russian hors d'oeuvres and tour
St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Cathedral
401 Turpin Dr., Anchorage

6:30 PM
Board chartered buses in the
Cathedral parking lot

7:00 PM
A Russian Feast Fit for a Czar
prepared by Executive Chef Felix Zolinger
Dakota Alaskan Lodge

The Lucy Cuddy Center
University of Alaska campus
5211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK

All proceeds will go to help renovate the bell tower at St. Innocent Orthodox Cathedral



Herman steadies his boat to shuttle pilgrims to the larger boats

For many years, my dream was to drive to Alaska. I wanted to observe nature and the land as well as experience contact with its people. The more I read about this land and talked to people who had visited there, the more I desired to go there.

As a retired teacher in New York State, I relocated to Cape Coral, Florida, for health reasons. When in Florida, an additional health issue, a cardiac problem, arose. As a member of Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Fort Myers, Florida my deep spiritual roots and faithful religious practices led me to pray for help and guidance, not only from Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, but also from the benevolent and powerful Saint Herman. And pray I did. Shortly thereafter, my prayers were answered. My cardiac problem resolved itself. This was a miracle I truly believe happened through the intervention of Saint Herman.

*AS THE MOUNTAINS ARE BOUND ABOUT JERUSALEM
SO THE LORD IS BOUND ABOUT HIS PEOPLE
FROM HENCEFORTH AND FOREVERMORE*



I also believe that, through my prayers, Saint Herman blessed my family with a new life. For many years, my married daughter and her husband remained childless. Her life's desire was that she become a mother. In December of 2005 I was introduced to my nine month old, adopted granddaughter from Kazakhstan. Aruzhan Aleksandra is a precious, loving, and beautiful child.

In early July, I started the drive from Cape Coral, Florida, to Alaska. During my 15 days of driving, my thoughts focused on my expectations of the pilgrimage. When I arrived at the Alaska border, I had driven over 7,000 miles!

Because the pilgrimage to Saint Herman was a week away, I spent time touring parts of Alaska. I experienced a long, hard, and slow drive on gravel roads to Prudhoe Bay. My walk in the Arctic Ocean was icy cold. I also drove along the Alaskan Pipeline, what an engineering wonder. It was cold and slippery walking on the Matuska Glacier near Palmer! With a guide and his boat from Homer, I went halibut fishing and caught my limit.

The Pilgrimage events approached. The ferry ride of 9 1/2 hours from Homer to Kodiak Island passed enjoyably with engaging conversa-



tion and breathtaking scenery.

In my car, now off the ferry, I was able to locate Saint Herman Seminary and Holy Resurrection Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Sunday's liturgy was beautiful. The vesting of His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI was a personally stirring ritual. The choir was inspiring and I had the privilege of meeting Father Isidore of Saint Innocent Cathedral in Anchorage, Father Innocent of Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Kodiak, and His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI of the Diocese of Alaska.



On Monday, August 7th, the service of the Akathist to Saint Herman was celebrated. It was different from any Akathist service I had ever attended. It was here, at the Cathedral, that I touched Saint Herman's belt, klobuk, and venerated his holy relics. For me, such an unworthy person, to have the opportunity to be this near to some one who is so holy, brought chills to my body and tears to my eyes. Thank you Saint Herman, for answering my prayers. I felt, at that moment, an up surging of my faith.



On Tuesday, August 8th, departing for Monk's Lagoon, I was a passenger on one of the larger boats and then transferred to a smaller boat that cloud travel in the shallow water to the shore of Spruce island. After landing on the shore, I walked up the path marked with icons. Upon seeing this beautiful place, set among massive spruce trees, that Saint Herman called home, I felt the holiness of Spruce Island.

The Liturgy, served at Saint Sergius & Herman of Valaam Church, was again beautiful with Bishop NIKOLAI, the many priests, and the deacons serving. After the completion of the Liturgy, the Blessing of the new bells, the Blessing of the graves and the Blessing of the Spring from which Saint Herman drank, I too drank from the Spring. Then I returned to the church, and crawled under the building to pray by Saint Herman's grave. I thought how blessed I was to be here, maybe stepping in the very same place where Saint Herman placed his feet, and to drink from the same spring where he once had drank. Thank you again Saint Herman for answering my prayers.

Back out in the sunshine, I walked to the shore to enjoy a picnic prepared by the Sisterhood of the cathedral and faithful from

the village of Ouzinkie. The fellowship and Orthodox spirituality were present in full force.

As it came time to depart from Spruce Island, I felt sadness in my heart. I also felt an inspiration to return here in the year 2010 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Saint Herman's Sainthood.

On Wednesday, August 9th, on Kodiak Island, the celebration of a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Holy Resurrection Cathedral was followed by a banquet at the Kodiak High School Commons, The entertainment, food, and fellowship were fabulous.



Once again I was overwhelmed. It seemed that with the 2006 Pilgrimage nearing its end, no one wanted to leave. Many, many friendships had formed.

On Thursday, August 10th, we celebrated an Akathist to Saint Herman. We were again able to venerate the relics of our dear Saint Herman and His Grace anointed us again. With the conclusion of this service came a feeling in my heart that my pilgrimage had just started with the renewal of my faith in Orthodoxy.

On Friday, I sat on a bench looking out over Monashka Bay at Fort Abercrombie. I reflected back on the memorable experience that had been such a soul-moving

ONE PILGRIM



His Grace Bishop THOMAS
His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI

part of my life. My Pilgrimage expectations had been far surpassed.

I thank you Vladyka NIKOLAI, Priest Isidore, Priest Innocent, Archpriest Chad, Matushka Thekla, the Deacons, Parishioners, and the ladies who prepared all the food, and the out-of-town visitors who made the Pilgrimage so meaningful to me.

We all need a vacation from life's daily routine. Why not include a spiritual experience to renew your faith and enjoy the Orthodox fellowship that accompanies this beautiful celebration?

Carry many lifetime memories as I drove home - my dreams were fulfilled. The total trip covered more than 18,000 miles.

Thank you, God, for giving us Saint Herman. Thank you, Saint Herman, for bringing Orthodoxy to America.

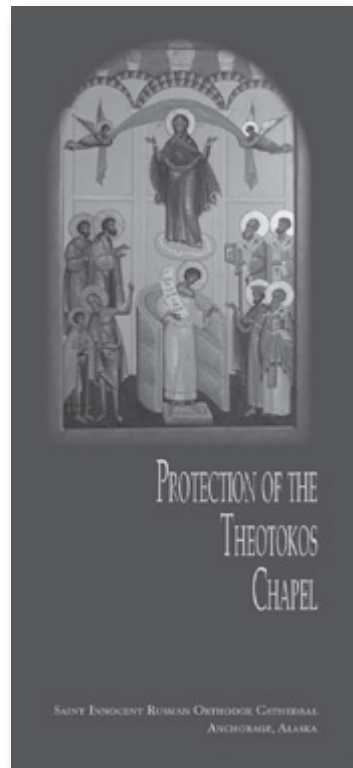
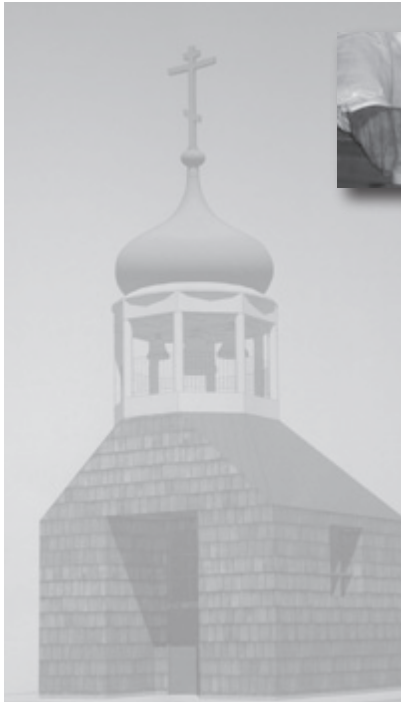
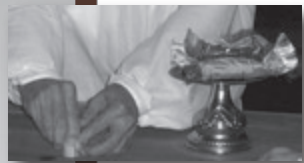
~ John Gala



John Gala visits with His Grace



The Pokrov Chapel in St. Innocent Cathedral was consecrated by His Grace on The Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God. This momentous occasion highlights the continued growth at the See of the Diocese of Alaska. The faithful are now preparing to adorn this chapel with new icons. For more information on how you can be a part of this beautification contact Fr. John at: (907) 333-9723



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ORTHODOX INTER-SEMINARIAN MOVEMENT

GATHERS AT SAINT HERMAN SEMINARY



Gathered together with His Grace, who spoke of his participation in helping to form OISM when he was in seminary



ILAASI
FRIENDS OF
ST. HERMAN
SEMINARY



Nativity of Our Lord Church

This October, Saint Herman Seminary hosted a gathering of seminarians from the Orthodox Inter-Seminary Movement who came to Kodiak on a pilgrimage to venerate the holy relics of St. Herman of Alaska and visit the holy places on Spruce Island.

For most, it was their first pilgrimage to Alaska. It was a time of refreshment and spiritual nourishment, a time to gather with the entire St. Herman Seminary community and get to know one another, through prayer, fellowship and traveling to Spruce Island.

Arrival in Ouzinkie Harbor



A future OISM member...

Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos



NEW BELL TOWERS ADORN SPRUCE ISLAND & SHS



The Blessing of the new Bell Tower at Saint Herman Seminary

The summer of 2006 brought the blessing of two new Bell Towers by His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI.



The first is located at Ss. Sergius & Herman of Valaam Church on Spruce Island. Nicholas Buick generously donated the five bells and Fr. Mikel Bock and a team of college students from the University of Connecticut built the bell tower in preparation for the St. Herman Pilgrimage.

At St. Herman Seminary, Mark Galperin of Blagovest Bells donated five bells. A sixth bell and the bell tower were constructed from a donation given through a generous bequest by local Kodiak resident Marie Chandler and blessed in her memory.

An OCMC team led by Pat Kvasnikoff and assisted by Fr. Innocent Dresdow designed and built the bell tower.



Nick Buick receives St. Herman Medal & Gramota from His Grace Bishop NIKOLAI

ST. HERMAN ORTHODOX SEMINARY



THE FIRST MISSIONARIES SCHOLARSHIP FUND

This new scholarship will fund the annual budget which provides a debt free theological education for our seminarians. It costs \$30,000 per year to educate one seminarian at SHS.

Our goal is to find 212 donors who will each offer a \$1000 scholarship to honor the 212 years of Orthodoxy in America.

With an overflow enrollment and a full complement of faculty for the first time in many years, this scholarship will ensure SHS a bright future.



The First Missionaries Scholarship offers an opportunity for 212 donors to give an annual gift of \$1000.00 to St. Herman Seminary. This gift can be given in installments over the year or as in full by contacting the seminary at: (907) 486-3524. Join us in preparing Alaska's future clergy & lay leaders!



A BEACON OF HOPE

On November 2, 2006 a 30ft. x 17ft. steel cross was airlifted and mounted on the top of Mt. Herman overlooking Monk's Lagoon. This is the third cross to be raised up at this location, the first two being wooden. A community-wide event; the cross was fashioned by local Kodiak resident Reed Oswald, funding and materials were provided by The Natives of Kodiak Association and materials donated by many including the Kodiak Electric Association whose lineman helped prepare the anchor points on the mountain for the guide wires. The Ouzinkie Native Corporation graciously granted permission for the cross to be mounted on the site.

Because of its historical significance, the Coast Guard volunteered to airlift the cross to Spruce Island underneath a Jayhawk helicopter. At 1:30pm the four man Coast Guard ground crew was dropped off at the top of the mountain and the area was secured for the safety of the crew and ground party. At approximately 2:00pm the approaching helicopter was a stunning site as 30 feet below it the cross swung like pendulum back and forth in the 20 knot headwind flying over the Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile, the faithful gathered 100 yards away from where the cross was to be placed, singing O God Save Thy people and asking for St. Herman's intercessions for the safety of the Coast Guard crew, who all volunteered for this mission.

As the strong headwind continued the pilots skillfully hovered as the crew on the ground used ropes rated to withstand 9000lbs of tension, to guide the cross into its proper position. Once temporarily secured the ground crew said fairwell and were picked up by the same helicopter that had been hovering overhead for the last 20 minutes.

As soon as the helicopter cleared Father Innocent & Monk Martyrius gathered a cold, wind blown crew of local residents & members of St. Innocent Academy to begin the dangerous task of leveling the cross and securing it with a total of 16 guide cables in 25 mph winds, below freezing with only 3 hours left of working day light.

Through the prayers of St. Herman, by 5:00pm the cross was secured and everyone was able to make the long journey back down the mountain as the last light of day faded.

We would like to express our gratitude to all who gave so freely to make the raising of this cross possible. Spruce Island once again has a cross, standing as a beacon and testimony of St. Herman's holy labors and protection of this Holy Site.



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- Benefactor** \$500.00 Same as for Contributing with a 20% discount in the Museum Shop & Cafe
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A BEACON OF HOPE THE CROSS ON SPRUCE ISLAND



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