AN HISTORIC EVENT
CONSECRATION OF THE MONASTERY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION FOR WOMEN

The Holy Liturgy was officiated outside. His Eminence Metropolitan Ireney read the prayers for the first Liturgy before a great concourse of people. His Eminence was assisted by three Bishops and a sobor of priests from the Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Western Ukraine.

The monastery has the blessing of most of the Orthodox bishops in this country and is intended to receive women from all jurisdictions and to serve all Orthodox in their common language. To emphasize this fact, bishops from three jurisdictions performed the consecration and concelebrated the first Liturgy before a congregation of over 800 people from near and far, representing all the jurisdictions in America. The presence of 25 priests from a large number of jurisdictions gave their seal of approval of this project of great hopes for the future of Orthodoxy in America.

Monasticism has been the backbone of the Orthodox Church throughout the centuries. From within the walls of the monastery came its spiritual fruits. The monks and nuns not only preserved the Church but propagated it far and wide. The spiritual value of monasticism is indisputable. It is large and to the local parishes. The monastery is a retreat for prayer, rededication and recouping of forces to carry on the work of the Church in the world.

Monasticism has never been fully understood and appreciated by the Orthodox in America. When there is such a great need of priests and dedicated persons in the front lines of action of the parish, many cannot understand that zealous Orthodoxy should retire into the quiet of a monastery and isolate themselves from the trials and tribulations of the world. Having no precedent to measure the benefits of monasticism in this country, the draft of its usefulness and very existence will persist in the minds of many, until the time when the effects will begin to be felt on the local level.

This, the Monastery of the Transfiguration hopes to eventually achieve. By erecting the most able, most learned and most dedicated women, who will forebear the state of matrimony to 'marry' the Church, the monastery through its cycle of services, contemplative life, prayer, study and writing, furthering of certain skills necessary to the Church (ikon painting, vestment-making, etc.) its retreats for the laity and so many other practical services, will not only prove its worth, but hopefully start many other centers to be available to the Orthodox throughout the country in the immediate vicinity.

Elwood City was picked for its proximity to over 100 Orthodox parishes of all jurisdictions with a great concentration of Orthodox monastics. Once the monastery is fully functioning, they can commute to it for special occasions.

The 90-acre plot upon which the first phase of a grandiose master plan was completed is isolated enough to offer privacy and close enough to make it easily available to anyone who wishes to visit it. Situated on a plateau, surrounded by wooded hills, the view on all sides is breath-taking. As I stood at the first outdoor Divine Liturgy and gazed in all directions, I could not help but recall the words of the Psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches." Standing before the modest redwood building, I closed my eyes and envisioned the majestic, incompetent monastery with its many cells, work rooms, library and the many other facilities, clustered around a very beautiful, Byzantine-style church, which is projected by Mother Alexandra and those like her who still can dream, hope and work for its realization. Surely, as is in the past, founders and benefactors of monasteries will also be found in this country.

Those who attended the consecration ceremonies and the first Liturgy at the Monastery of the Transfiguration were deeply impressed by the ceremonies, by the true Christian fellowship and by the modest but imposing building. A committee composed mostly from the Orthodox parishes in Elwood City was in charge of all the arrangements. Parishes and priests from the Pittsburgh area assumed many of the responsibilities, such as mailing out invitations, bringing in baked goods and coming along with parishioners.

The weather was ideal — sunny, but not too warm. The police were present on the highway to direct traffic and on the grounds to assist in parking. Many parishes hired buses to bring their parishioners.

Metropolitan Ireney of the Russian Metropolis, assisted by Bishop Gerasimos of the Greek Diocese of Pittsburgh, Bishop Ambrosius of the Russian Diocese of Pittsburgh and Bishop Vladean of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, consecrated the monastery and concelebrated the Holy Liturgy. Each jurisdiction designated one priest to assist with the four bishops. The other priests took part in the procession robed in their cassocks and assembled in the church and the area around the outdoor altar during the Liturgy. Responses were given by the Serbian Choir from Midland.

Only the bishops, priests, nuns and a small group of laymen were able to enter the "A" shape church, which can accommodate about 100 persons. Ordinarily it will be more than adequate for the size of the mass, but on this day only a small part of the participants were able to witness the consecration of the altar.

To the right and left of the church are cells for the nuns and guests, a kitchen, refectoriy, workroom and a 2-car garage. They were not completely finished at the time of the consecration. Some parishes still had to be finished.

The central building of the Monastery with the Chapel. During the Service of Consecration, the crowd gathered outside since very few were able to get inside.
AN HISTORIC EVENT

(Continued from page 3)

An historic event has taken place at the monastery of Holy Ascension in the Romanian Orthodox diocese of America. The event was the consecration of the new church of the monastery, which marks a major milestone in the development of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America.

The consecration service was held on October 28th, 1973, and was attended by a large following of the faithful from the surrounding area. The service was conducted by Bishop Maxim, the primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America, and was witnessed by other bishops and clergy from the diocese.

The new church, which was built on the site of an old church that had been destroyed by fire, is a beautiful example of traditional Romanian Orthodox architecture. The church is built in the shape of a Greek cross, with a central altar and four smaller altars. The interior is adorned with intricate carvings and paintings, and is bathed in a soft, warm light.

The consecration service was a draw for many who wanted to witness the ceremony. The service began with the reading of the divine Liturgy, which was followed by the reading of the consecration service. The service was conducted with great solemnity and dignity, and was witnessed by a large crowd of believers.

After the service, the bishops and clergy gathered to receive the congregation and to bless the faithful. The church was then opened to the public, and many came forward to pray and to witness the miracle of the consecration.

The consecration of the new church marks a significant milestone in the development of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America. It is a testament to the faith and determination of the Romanian Orthodox community, and serves as a inspiration to all who seek to build a stronger and more vibrant church.

LETTER TO BISHOP VALERIAN

Your Grace:

As an American Orthodox of Greek background and as one of the few Orthodox Forces now serving overseas (Korea), I want to tell you how much I was moved by your comments at the recent World Council of Churches meetings. My wife and I went over a clipping from the Saturday, July 15 issue of the Los Angeles Herald Examiner in which you were quoted in a story with a Uppada dateline from the United Press International.

I was also shocked at the large number of Americans of all races and denominations who came together as a forum for their own political views, especially regarding the war in Vietnam. Your suggestion that if the delegates wanted to cease the war, then they should pass a resolution of censure against all wars including World War II, etc., was a good one, and I am sure helped to put the issue in its proper perspect.

Your comment on trying to change the social systems of all nations, not just the United States system was also very sound.

I am pleased that you spoke out as you did on these subjects, and hope that you will continue to speak out on the issues of the day.

Our Orthodox bishops in America need to become more involved in the mainstream of American life, social reform, and other such areas, but not to the excess to which some Protestant and Catholic groups have gone.

The number one objective of all Orthodox in America, clergy and laity alike, should be the unification of the various ethnic churches into a strong American Church, so that our voice might be better heard throughout the land. Please continue your work by your own actions and those of Father Vasile Hatescu in the pages of SOLIA.

Clifford T. Argue, 1st Lt., U.S.A.F.