

the
ORTHODOX
vision

Winter, 2005

the same yesterday, today and tomorrow



Around the Diocese

by His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN of Berkeley

The year 2005 appears to be a year of anniversaries. St. Spiridon Cathedral in Seattle celebrated 110 years and its pastor, Archpriest Vadim Pogrebnjak, celebrated his 40th year of Holy Priesthood. As, mentioned in the last issue of The Vision, Calhan, Colorado celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding August 19 – 21. St. Innocent Church of Tarzana celebrated its 50th anniversary in October, just following our Diocesan Assembly. And the Joy of All Who Sorrow Mission of Culver City, California now celebrates five years as part of our Diocese. There is much for which to be thankful.

Hidden in the midst of these and other anniversary celebrations is our Orthodox Church in America's celebration of its 35th year of autocephaly, an event that will have been noted at the 14th All American Council in Toronto by the time this publication goes to press. Thirty-five years is a rather odd anniversary for churches to celebrate with much fanfare. But, nonetheless, it is not a bad thing for us to think about what has transpired since the then Bishop THEODOSIUS of Sitka and Alaska received from the hands of Patriarch PIMEN of Moscow what has come to be known as *The Tomos of Autocephaly*. Where have we gone in 35 years? What have we become? What are we called to be?

In thinking about the above questions, I realized my own personal history in the Orthodox Church roughly coincides with all but two of those 35 years. In looking back I have witnessed many changes, developments, if you like. And I can honestly say we are **not** the same Church we were then and we **are** the same Church we were then. In the words of the 14th All American Council's preparatory papers, we have the same identity, but are not identical to the Church of 1970. We have grown and matured. Much like an infant, we were young and, perhaps, a bit naïve, with much to learn. But, like that same infant 35 years later, we are different, yet somehow the same.

Most, if not all, of the parishes that made up our diocese in 1970 are still active today. But, in 35 years, our diocese has doubled its size, both in the number of communities and our population. We preach the same Gospel, but in many cases to a very different flock. In 1970 most of the parishes of our diocese were made up of Russian-speaking clergy and faithful. My own home parish of Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral had two

services. The Slavonic service by far had the greatest attendance. Three and a half decades later, the English service has the greater attendance. But, the vision of the Church remains the same: we minister to the people God gives us. The population has changed, but the Church has remained the same.

There was another anniversary on Pentecost this year. The St. Paul parish of Las Vegas celebrated the 10th anniversary of the consecration of its temple. I could not help but be amazed at what God has called out of the world to be His Church in, of all places, Las Vegas. There at the same Liturgy were Orthodox faithful of an incredible variety: Carpatho-Russian transplants from Pennsylvania and New York, the children of Russian immigrants who came to the United States after WWII from China and the refugee camps of Europe, Eritreans from East Africa who have embraced the fullness of Orthodox Christianity, newly-arrived Russian acrobats and a host of others who have come to the Orthodox Faith from other confessions. This diverse crowd, people who could not be more different, was gathered together by the Grace of the Holy

Spirit on Pentecost 2005 to become something greater than the sum of their parts: the Body of Christ. Eating at the Lord's Table in His Heavenly Kingdom, these very different men, women and children expressed the timeless reality of the Church in a very American way.

As Americans, we have all come from different places. We have brought to this country the richness of our various backgrounds. It is a quality that makes this country great. Our American Church is different because it is composed of a variety of people, cultures and nationalities, each bringing his or her experience and background into the common life of the



Church. This is what we are. And together, who we are is the Body of Christ. The very same Body that in Moscow is made up of Muscovites, in Athens – Athenians, in Ghana – Ghanaians...

There is something else about our American church life that is rather different, if not unique: the coffee hour. When Patriarch Alexei visited the United States and our diocese about ten years ago, he commented on the common life he saw in our communities after the Liturgy was over. In other places, people come to the Liturgy and then go to their homes. When I was in Athens, people either went to their homes after the Sunday Liturgy or to one of a number of cafes. In Russia, it was very similar. There were no parish halls. There was no gathering after the Liturgy. People came and then went. BUT, our church life is rather different. In almost every parish, we gather together after the Liturgy. We have a sense or expression of community others never dreamed of.

These are, you may rightly say, rather cursory observations. But, as I look back on the Church that has come to be after 35 years, I see “a mature ecclesiastical organism” that has ripened and developed, a Church that could only exist in America, an American Church. As time passes, with God’s help and guidance, we will continue to grow “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). But, to do this we must be honest. We must be who and what we are. And, whether we are Russian-Americans, or Greek-Americans, or Irish-Americans, we are Orthodox-Americans: diverse people called out of the world to become the heirs of God’s Kingdom.

Eis Polli Eti Despota!

Martha and Mary House

An Orthodox Christian Maternity Home for Pregnant Women in Crisis Who Choose Life for Their Unborn Child

Written by Sarah Elisabeth Oftedal, Housemother

By the Grace of God and with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, Martha and Mary House was incorporated as a religious nonprofit institution in the Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of the West, in November 2001, - to our knowledge the first Orthodox Christian Maternity Home in the United States. On our Board of Directors, headed by His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco and the West, are members from the Greek and Antiochian Orthodox Churches, as well as the Orthodox Church in America. A Serbian Orthodox parish sponsors our website. Members of our Advisory Board and volunteers are from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and local Protestant parishes.

(Martha and Mary, continued on page 2.)

In This Issue

Volume 11, Number 1

Around the Diocese

His Grace, Bp. BENJAMIN
~inside front cover

Martha and Mary House
Sarah Elisabeth Oftedal~pg. 1

News~pgs. 6, 7

Reflection on Annual Fort Liturgy~pg. 8

Metropolitan THEODOSIUS Celebrates 10th Anniversary at St. Paul's~pg. 9

Upcoming Conferences and Retreats~pg. 9

”...departed this life before us, in hope of the Resurrection . . .”~pg. 10

The Death and Burial of an Orthodox Christian
by Maria Nash~pg 11

Memory Eternal!~pg. 13

Historical Perspective
Orthodoxy in Seattle~pg 14

Appointments, Transfers, Announcements~pg 16

Ask Father Joseph~pg. 19

Discourse On the Day
of the Baptism of Christ,
by Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of
Constantinople~pg 20

*Cover Photo: Burial of an Orthodox Christian,
(Story, page 10)*

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(Martha and Mary, continued from page 1.)

What the Martha and Mary Maternity House Provides

As an Orthodox Christian Maternity Home, we provide pregnant women in crisis an alternative to abortion: residential housing with privacy and confidentiality, with practical, emotional, and spiritual support. We recognize the sanctity of life and that each pregnant woman who comes to us - and her unborn child, regardless of ethnic, cultural, religious or social background - is unique and precious, created in the image of God and loved by Him. We are grateful that she has chosen to give birth and pray that she may come to know herself as a child of God and seek His will for the child He has entrusted to her. We pray that she may discover her God-given personal resources and how to develop them through education or vocational training; that she may recognize the past choices that brought her to the current crisis, and now seek the best choices for her own future and for the future of her child.

We teach about decision-making - about choices and consequences, courtship, purity and abstinence before marriage, the sacrament and holiness of marriage, and God's design for the nurture of children in families with a father and mother who belong to God, to one another, and to their children.

We help the pregnant mom carefully consider three parenting options:

1. **Marriage** to the father of her child or another committed man who will protect, provide and care for the mother and child - in which case he may join her in premarital counseling at Martha and Mary House.

2. **Fatherless single parenting.** The expectant mom will need to develop a realistic plan for housing, work/school, transportation, and childcare in advance of the birth.

3. **Choosing an adoptive family** for her child through open adoption. We provide contact with prospective adoptive families through the Orthodox organization Zoe for Life and other agencies. For birth mothers who choose adoption, we seek to provide a Christian host family who can give nurture and boundaries to the mom to help her with a new start in school or on a job.

At Martha and Mary House, the expectant moms pursue a program of study or vocational training, some are employed; others actively seek employment. We have Orthodox family-style living with morning and evening prayer, and we share responsibility for housekeeping duties. House Rules include mandatory Church attendance, Bible study, prenatal, child-birth and child care classes. Working with local agencies and volunteers, we help facilitate a healthy birth for the babies and a healthy spiritual rebirth for the new mothers. An Orthodox priest who is a clinical therapist visits the House weekly. He joins us for morning prayer and provides counseling.

To protect her confidentiality and privacy, a pregnant mom may need or want to relocate to another area until after the birth of her child. Martha and Mary House is developing a

network of maternity homes and parishes that can provide nurturing host homes. Expectant moms who have suffered pregnancy loss by choice are provided post abortion grief and reconciliation counseling in a 12-Step Program.

Funding for Martha and Mary House

The girls who live at the house contribute what they can. A minimum of \$300 monthly is expected, which is what the girl would get as cash aid under the CAL-Works Program. Otherwise, our funding comes through donations from individuals, parishes, and organizations. No public funding is accepted.

The Vision of Martha and Mary House

The vision of Martha and Mary House was long in unfolding. Perhaps the seed was sown already in 1957, when, alone and scared, I gave birth in secret to my first living child in a Salvation Army Maternity Home - intending to place the child for adoption. In 1987, I found healing and forgiveness for an earlier abortion loss through a seminar and the sacraments of the Episcopal Church. In 1988, four of us founded a 12-Step Abortion Survivors Anonymous group. I wrote the workbook. I lived alone but yearned to be more responsible before the Lord in this area, perhaps in a house where older women would teach or "mother" younger women, as Saint Paul suggested to Titus. In the early Church virgins and widows lived with family or in community. They were vulnerable alone - then as now.

In 1992, I joined the traditionalist Anglican Franciscan Third Order of Divine Compassion, making a vow of simplicity, purity, and fidelity, committed to a rule of prayer, and to serve and love God in my neighbor. I prayed to help those who suffered the wounds of abortion. In 1994, I came "home" to Orthodoxy and was chrismated in 1995 at Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Church in Poway, California. My patron saint is the New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia, whose relics are in the altar at St. John's.

With the blessing of Bishop Tikhon, I continued to facilitate Abortion Survivors Anonymous groups. Annually in the U.S., 1.3 million unborn children, each bearing the image of God, are legally killed in their mother's womb. Worldwide the number is 46 million (reported by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood). When a child conceived in us dies by abortion, the core of who we are as women and mothers is wounded, as is the heart of the men who fathered aborted children. The impact of post abortion grief and guilt causes physical, emotional, and spiritual damage to families. In our groups we see the tragedies and the healing of lives and relationships through reconciliation with God, our aborted children and finally ourselves.

The Orthodox Church believes aborted children are among the Holy Innocents, martyred saints who pray for us. We who lost our children by choice may remember them in love each time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy! With the martyred Saints their memory is eternal!

The New Martyr Elizabeth is a Fitting Patron of Martha and Mary House

But how much better to provide pregnant women at risk the support they need to give life to their child rather than to choose abortion. The New Martyr Elizabeth, founder of the Martha and Mary Convent of Love and Mercy in Moscow in 1909, was a young woman when she told her brother, Grand Duke Ernest of Hesse, "Everyone has to strive for an ideal if they wish to live in fullness." She feared hers would be the hardest of all to attain since she longed to "become perfect woman," which meant she must "first - and with full understanding - learn how to forgive everything." (E.M. Almedingen, *An Unbroken Unity*, p. 55). When Elizabeth's beloved husband of 23 years, the Grand Duke Sergei, was murdered by a terrorist's bomb, Elizabeth visited the young Communist assassin in prison and forgave him, assuring him also of her husband's forgiveness and God's mercy. Elizabeth, herself, was martyred by the Communists in 1918.

Martha and Mary House would be an appropriate name, and the New Martyr Elizabeth a fitting patron for a house of healing for women who had aborted their children - and for pregnant women in crisis who chose to give life instead. Having named it for the sisters of Lazarus of Bethany, in whose house of prayer, hospitality, and charity Jesus often was a guest, we prayed that He would also be our guest as we sought to love Him in all who came to us.

In April 2001 we called an organizational meeting at Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Church. An Interim Board of Directors was formed. In August we found our "perfect house." I moved in as housemother three days before 9/11 - a stark reminder that God alone is our help and shield. He furnished our house beautifully with donations from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant friends. The bedrooms for four pregnant moms are each named for a saint. Our Abortion Survivor Group meets in the library/prayer room, named for Saint Mary. The kitchen/dining room is named for Saint Martha. The house was blessed on Theophany, January 6, 2002, with more than 50 guests from local Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches, ASA (Abortion Survivors Anonymous), and the Pro-Life community.

Life at Martha and Mary House

We envisioned Martha and Mary House as an Orthodox family home - the surroundings peaceful and simple - with flowers, fruit trees, a vegetable garden, a pet or two. It was to be a sanctuary for those whose lives were in crisis and turmoil, where they may be helped to face and work through difficult decisions: grief and guilt associated with abortion, and the choice of parenting or placing a child for adoption.

Our advisors emphasized structure - our "daughters" needed to know what to expect and what was expected of them. Rules provide boundaries and help develop self-discipline. With samples from *Zoe for Life*, we formulated an Application,

(Martha and Mary, continued on page 4.)

(Martha and Mary, continued from page 3.)

Housing Admission Agreement, Family Guidelines, and House Rules. The "daughter" signs the documents and a contract waiver before moving in for a three-week trial period. To break the rules is to make a choice to leave. From our perspective of inexperience, the rules seemed extensive. But we have learned to expect the unexpected and have added or narrowed down several rules.

In the morning we pray in the words of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow: "In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by you. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering or embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, and, you yourself, pray in me. Amen."

Our First "Daughter"

Our first "daughter" was a foreign student, eight months pregnant, hiding from the father of her child. She planned to place the baby for adoption and return home. "Anna" was gentle and quiet, but within hours of her arrival, the father of her baby was at the door, demanding to see her. We had thought it safe to let her family overseas know our street address for mailing purposes, and he had contacted them. We no longer give out our physical address lightly!

The next three weeks were busy with trips to the Pregnancy Care Clinic, lab work, registering at the hospital Birth Center, signing up for emergency Medi-Cal (which pays for birthing expenses of poor mothers), and sessions with the adoption agency worker. Adoption was a courageous choice for "Anna," who longed to be a wife and mother. That, for her, was not possible. She chose an adoptive family who came to meet her at Martha and Mary House. They would take the baby home from the hospital.

"Anna" prepared a photo album and a box with treasures for the baby and would breastfeed in the hospital against her doctor's advice. Nursing would create a strong bond with the baby and make parting more painful, but "Anna" insisted. "Later I will know I did all I could for my child," she said. I was the labor coach and witnessed the miracle of "little Anna's" birth.

Mother and daughter were doing well, but adoption plans were blocked when the birth father filed for custody. In response, "Anna" sought custody herself. A court order prevented her from leaving the country with the baby. They would stay at Martha and Mary House until the situation was resolved. "Anna" rejoiced in mothering, and "Little Anna" was thriving on breast milk. They attended Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Church. "Anna" learned morning and evening prayers, and much of the Divine Liturgy by heart. A local attorney gave pro bono representation in court, and volunteers from several parishes supervised court-ordered visitations by the birth father. He was investigated by Child Protective Services for

past misconduct and found to be a "substantial risk" to his daughter.

The situation brought us in contact with police, Child Protective Services, and public health nurses. We are blessed to be in an area where the California state pilot program, Welcome Home Baby, was inaugurated. It offers home visits by primary care nurses, lactation consultants, health educators, and social workers. All welcomed our Home as a community resource.

Two more expectant mothers provided new lessons. One needed drug and alcohol rehabilitation - a fact we did not discern from the start. As an abortion survivor, she participated in our group, but complained about rules and broke them. After two months, she was accepted in a program better suited to her needs. The second girl was a victim of domestic violence who had suffered pregnancy loss. She worked through grief and anger in our Abortion Survivors Anonymous group, but refused to keep House Rules and doctor's orders. After several midnight trips to the emergency room, she moved to a transitional program for youth who have been in foster care.

Our fourth expectant Mom arrived eight months pregnant from a domestic violence shelter. She was hiding from her husband, who was the father of the baby. Little "Tim" was born a healthy nine pounds. His mother was diagnosed with severe postpartum depression. The father, visiting on weekends, proved better able to care for his son. Child Protective Services monitored "Little Tim's" progress and concluded that he was safe with his mother at Martha and Mary House. By the grace of God, they remained with us for three months until the mother and son were moved to their home county. The father was given custody; the mother, visitation rights.

Our Growth Over Three Years

Our original vision was for two Orthodox women to share the responsibility of living at the House, but I was still alone, on duty 24 hours, 7 days a week. Six pregnant moms had come for help. One was still with us. "Anna" and "little Anna" had moved into the master bedroom, and "Anna" proved to be God's provision for an assistant. The two pregnant girls who left us were single moms on welfare-to-work assistance. Two more expectant moms had joined us. One was working and planned to be a single parent.

At first we had been unaware of the impact of fatherlessness on our society. Our awakening began at the local Health and Human Services. Our girls were eligible for Cal-Works, a welfare-to-work program with minimal cash aid, requiring that they place their babies in day care at 12 weeks of age, while they worked or attended school. A caseworker told us that 90 percent of their clients are single mothers. "We see the tragedies of the children daily." A third of America's children are born to single mothers. Nearly another third are raised by a divorced parent. They are likely to spend much of their childhood in day care. Evidence is growing that they suffer nega-

tive consequences. A child born out of wedlock – and raised by a single parent - is six times more likely to be in poverty than a child of married parents, three times more likely to repeat a grade or to become pregnant as a teenager, and twenty two times more likely to be incarcerated than a child from an intact home, wrote Mike Mc Manus in the Washington Times. Of the current U.S. prison population, 80 percent were raised by single parents!

In contrast, studies of children adopted as babies show that they do better than average children. Only 7 percent of adolescents adopted in the first year of life repeated a grade in school, compared to 12 percent of those living with both birth parents, and 30 percent of children with a single parent. Adopted adolescents have higher self-esteem than a national sample of teenagers and are less likely to see their parents divorce (11 percent vs. 28 percent), reports the Search Institute. Mothers who place their children for adoption are more likely to graduate, be employed, and marry.

In the 1950s only 5 percent of children in the U.S. were born to unmarried mothers, and only one mom in ten chose to single parent. Illegitimacy was unacceptable. "Today ... fatherlessness is rampant and Americans treat the crisis with complacency and indifference," wrote Washington Times columnist Suzanne Fields in 2001. Of the 1.3 million babies born to single mothers in the U.S., less than 2 percent are placed for adoption. Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers have focused on encouraging single moms to keep their babies as an alternative to abortion, and report an adoption rate of "below one percent" - no better than Planned Parenthood.

We could see more clearly the need to teach God's design for the nurture of children, and made counseling about parenting options mandatory. Our "daughters" are each given an Orthodox Study Bible, and we are finding and developing suitable material based on the teachings of Scripture and the writings of the Fathers and Mothers of the Church. We have videos and workbooks on basic decision-making, abstinence, and adoption.

Two Adoptions in Our Second Year

We were grateful for two adoptions in our second year - and for the courage and sacrificial love of the two birth mothers. They wanted the best for their children. "Bonnie" wrote a poem to the adoptive parents of her son, ending with these lines:

*"I always will and have loved him
The best way that I could
And that was giving him to you."*

"Mary" wanted her baby to grow up with two parents, unlike herself. She would marry the father of her baby, or, if that was not an option, choose an adoptive family as Plan "B." She breastfed for three weeks before deciding on adoption. "I made the wrong decisions when I had sex before marriage. I suffer now, but it is my own fault. I don't want my daughter to suffer. She needs a Mommy and a Daddy and a solid fam-

ily. I want to make sure she has it." "Mary" attended her daughter's baptism and moved to the same town to live with an Orthodox host family. She goes to college and attends church with her daughter's family.

Our first adoption experiences taught us the importance of pre- and post-adoption counseling and preparation for the post partum emotional "roller-coaster." Metropolitan Philaret's morning prayer gives daily strength, as does the Akathist "Hymn to the Theotokos, Nurturer of Children" (a gift from Saint Paisius Monastery in Arizona), the Akathist hymn "Glory to God for All Things," and the Akathist hymn to the New Martyr Elizabeth, our patron saint. In her Rule for the Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow, she wrote: "We realize that it is necessary to base all doing of spiritual works on gratitude to the Lord, in so far as He permits us to serve Him, through our neighbor." We pray to be obedient to the needs God puts before us in a maternity home with its crises and joys.

Women and Adolescent Girls in the Church Are also Vulnerable to Abortion

In our third year we are more aware that women and adolescent girls in our Church are also vulnerable to abortion. A recent Alan Guttmacher Institute study shows a majority (78 percent), of women who obtained an abortion in 2001/2002 reported a religious affiliation. Twenty-two percent said they had no religious affiliation. Statistics from the Center for Disease Control and the Alan Guttmacher Institute show an overall decline in the U.S. abortion rate by 11 percent since 1994, from 1.6 million to 1.3 million. The sharpest decline was among women with no religious affiliation, among those in upper income brackets and adolescents 15 to 17 year old. Abortion increased among the poorest women and adolescents whose abortions are publicly funded.

The sharper decline in abortion rates for women with no religious affiliation may be explained by single motherhood being accepted as a "the normal American way of families" in a secular culture. The situation is different for someone who knows that premarital or extramarital sex is wrong. An out-of-wedlock pregnancy is not as acceptable to them. What will friends, family, the Church say? The local pregnancy care center offers to help her keep the baby, but that's not an option. What to do? Where to hide? There is pressure to choose abortion. Legal and quick, it makes the problem go away for everyone. Before Roe vs. Wade, a pregnant girl or woman could find refuge in a maternity home in a big city - or far away - and in confidentiality and anonymity give birth and place her child for adoption. With legalized abortion, maternity homes emptied and only a handful remain. But 1.3 million babies die in the womb in our country every year!

Zoe for Life wrote in 2002: "It is disturbing that most of the Orthodox Christian women who are in trouble do not turn to their Church for guidance; perhaps because there are

(Martha and Mary, continued on page 6.)

(Martha and Mary, continued from page 5.)

so few places to turn to within the Orthodox Community." Martha and Mary House is here - providing privacy and confidentiality for those looking for a way to continue their pregnancy - and perhaps choose the option of adoption for their child. Working with Zoe for Life, we pray others will join us, to establish a network of maternity homes and host homes for referrals across Orthodox America.

You may know someone who is pregnant, and thinking abortion is her only choice, yet something inside her wants to choose life. The child in her womb bears the image of God, Who has entrusted her with the choice to give her child a life and a future, choosing the best for herself as well. Please join us in telling her there are real alternatives to abortion.

Some of you may be praying about establishing a maternity home in your own area. We will be happy to share with you from our experience our House Rules and Family Guidelines. Application and Admission contracts are also available on request.

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Ss. Constantine and Helen Church Holds Fund Raiser for Colorado Springs Pregnancy Center

Earlier this year the parish of Ss Constantine and Helen, Colorado Springs, held a baby shower to support the Colorado Springs Pregnancy Center. For two weeks, members of the parish filled two large baskets to over flowing with all the basic needs that babies have. The clothes were taken to the center on the day of their much-awaited post- renovation Open House, Wednesday, February 16th.

Following the baby shower, some of our teens and pre-teens asked me how they could help the pregnancy center. When I

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asked them what talents they had, they quickly pointed out that they and their friends play a variety of instruments; in fact they soon listed not only musicians, but also talent that included a young man able to do amazing tricks with a pack of cards or a rope!

On Saturday, May 7th, the day before Mother's Day, a wide variety of musicians, singers, and readers of poetry, gathered in the fellowship hall of the church, located at 2770 North Chestnut Street. Father Anthony Karbo, asked for God's blessing, and that He would be glorified through the efforts of our young people. Families and friends alike were delighted by the variety of music, literature and magic that was presented by the young people who already have made the choice to support the sanctity of human life. The performers, ranging in age from five to 15 were, Katie and Megan Peters, Brent, Laura, Christa and Moriah Schlichting, Alex and Nina Glisan, Macrina, Seraphima and Mary Karbo, Daniel Jeffries, and Katie Ernst.

At the end of the concert the audience had another opportunity to support the work of the pregnancy center by bidding on items graciously donated by local merchants for the silent auction. A traditional English afternoon tea was prepared and served by women of the church to the attendees.

I once heard a workshop speaker say, "Children are our present, not our future." These youngsters, by stretching themselves and doing what many of us fear, performing in front of an audience so that others can benefit, expressed a love of Christ that was very humbling. I do believe that God was indeed glorified.

The proceeds from the event exceeded \$800.

Janet Sperry
Ss Constantine and Helen, Colorado Springs, Colorado



Calhan Centennial

The parish of The Holy Dormition in Calhan, Colorado, celebrated its Centennial on the weekend of August 19-21. During his third and final visit to Denver, St. Tikhon went to this prairie community on the border of El Paso and Elbert Counties and broke ground for one of four Orthodox Temples which, at one time stood within a couple of miles of each other. When the Heretical "Living Church", group got legal title to the original building, it was sent back to God by a fire. Later, the united parish in the area built a beautiful new temple where Hierarchical celebrations took place during the recent anniversary event.

Sitka Icon visits Las Vegas

The Wonderworking Sitka Icon of the Theotokos was at St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church in Las Vegas, NV for the Feast of All Saints of Alaska. It arrived on Friday, September 23rd at 6:00 PM. She was escorted into the Church by His Grace Bishop BENJAMIN of Berkeley, Archpriest John Zabinko (rector of St. Michael Cathedral in Sitka, AK), Priest Eric George Tosi (rector of St. Paul the Apostle Church in Las Vegas), Fr. Cyprian Sas (rector of St. Andrew Romanian Church in Las Vegas), and Deacon Elia Larson (of Kodiak, AK).

After the veneration of the icon, the parish celebrated the Vigil for the Feast of All Saints of Alaska. The church then remained open the entire evening as parishioners took turns reading the Akathist to the Sitka Icon and chanting the Psalms. People streamed into the church throughout the evening and into the morning to venerate the icon. In the morning, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the Feast followed by the Akathist to the icon. The faithful escorted the icon out of the church as it went on the next stage of the pilgrimage. On Sunday the approximately 350 people in attendance were anointed after Liturgy with oil from a lamp that burned in front of the icon throughout its visit.

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Matushka Retreat

The Annual Matushka Retreat was held Thursday, October 20, through Sunday, October 23, 2005, at The Life-Giving Spring Retreat Center, Boulder City, NV. The speaker was Matushka Myra Kovalak, Elevation of the Holy Cross, Williamsport, PA.



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Christ the Savior Church in San Francisco sports a variety of goods at their recent sidewalk sale.

Reflection on Annual Fort Liturgy

If you are looking for a scenic place to take your family for a 4th of July picnic next year, the old Russian fort 50 miles north of San Francisco on the rugged coast is an ideal place to soak in the intertwined Native American and Russian history of 150 or so years ago. The old Russian fur traders had combed the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico for a strategic location to establish a militarily protected trading center. Orthodox Christianity migrated from Russia into Alaska and had now pushed on into California where everyone, native and foreign alike, could be ministered to by the holy Sacraments of the Orthodox Church. Fort Ross was established in 1812, home of the first Orthodox church in the continental United States. That was the reason the then Fr. John Veniaminov (St. Innocent) left his parish in Alaska to make a pastoral visit to Fort Ross in 1836. While waiting for a ship to pick him up on a return trip to his diocese in Alaska, Fr. John extended his visit to the San Francisco Bay Area where he communicated with the Franciscan Padres in Latin since there was no other common language.

This past 4th of July was the 18th annual hierarchical Liturgy at the old chapel of the Fort. The key clergy who had always given life to this historical day of memorial were all either sick or far from home, but they encouraged their flocks to attend, and faithful from around the area shared not only the Hierarchical Liturgy, but also the Panhikida at the old cemetery nearby. Fr. Ian Mac Kinnon came all the way from Sacramento to be with us and serve together with Fr. Jonah and myself. The newly ordained Deacon, Fr. Michael Plefka from Elevation of the Holy Cross parish in Sacramento, served one of his first Hierarchical Liturgies. What a beautiful and touching sight to see His Grace Bishop Benjamin with servers, after the Liturgy, moving among the wooden three bar crosses punctuating the well manicured green grass, splashing them all generously with holy water.

The picnic on the grounds of the stockade turned out to be

a medley of tasty foods that each person or family brought and shared generously with everyone around. Several of the monks from the Monastery hovered over the assemblage of the feasting picnickers eager to share whatever they had. It was the most beautiful weather we have had at the Fort as long as I can remember that invigorated everyone, but the Holy Spirit was present with us in a special way, consolidating old friendships and making new ones.

Our Diocese of the West is blessed to have an official agreement with the California State Parks to serve the Divine Liturgy in the historical old chapel of the Fort every 4th of July. It was my privilege to support that agreement by setting aside all the other things I might have been doing on that day and joining my Bishop, clergy and many faithful to declare the joy of being heirs to the legacy of St. Innocent who had visited Fort Ross and my own parish Mission in Fremont way back in 1836. His spirit was with us as one of the many in the cloud of witnesses that encourage us all to relate our Orthodoxy to history in the State of California.

We heard the deafening blast of one of the original cast iron canons aimed at any intruders from the ocean. So don't approach the Fort from the ocean! Why don't we all set aside next year's 4th of July to join the Bishop at the holy old Fort: the place of the oldest church building in the continental U.S. It will be a great testimony to all how important our Orthodox history in the State of California is.

*Submitted by Archpriest Leo Arrowsmith, Rector
St. Innocent of Alaska Mission, Fremont*



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Metropolitan THEODOSIUS Celebrates 10th Anniversary at St. Paul's

His Beatitude Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, retired primate of The Orthodox Church in America, along with His Grace Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley and Chancellor of the Diocese of the West, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the consecration of St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church. The celebration was held on the Feast of Pentecost. His Beatitude was one of the consecrating bishops for the parish in 1995.

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church is the fastest growing parish in The Orthodox Church in America since it was granted autocephaly. It is a multicultural community which draws upon the host of native Orthodox as well as the newer communities of immigrants which represent the Russian, Eritrean, Ethiopian and other Eastern European and Middle Eastern people. This wonderful mosaic of people and traditions finds its expression in the host of parish activities. This was all represented at the celebration.

His Beatitude presented as a gift for the parish, the relics of St. Tikhon of Moscow, St. Innocent of Alaska, the Nun-martyr Elizabeth and St. Parasceva. These relics will be enshrined in new icons in the nave for the faithful to venerate. His Grace

also assisted the parish in introducing the new fresco work for the interior of the church. This work will begin in 2006 and take ten years to complete, transforming the interior of the church into an image of heaven. Following the Vigil and Divine Liturgy, there was a parish dinner which featured some unique entertainment. The Eritrean youth who hold weekly classes at the parish, presented some of their traditional dances. In addition, St. Paul's has a unique Russian community of acrobats and entertainers who work in the local shows in Las Vegas. Four groups of acrobats presented their special acts of gymnastics, juggling and tumbling to the delight of the people.

Finally, a talented parishioner and UNLV student, Steve Osborne, introduced his new composition entitled "Orthodoxy," with his string quartet. His Grace Bishop BENJAMIN also sat in with the quartet and played a few pieces on a borrowed violin. The entire St. Paul parish rejoices in this milestone and looks forward to many years of continued growth and service to the community.



Upcoming Conferences and Retreats

Mission Deanery Retreat: February 14-15 at Life-Giving Spring Retreat Center. All diocesan clergy are welcome to attend. Contact Fr. Matthew Tate for details.

Orientation for New Clergy: An orientation for all new clergy to the Diocese of the West will be held at LGS following the Mission Deanery Retreat February 16-17. Topics to be discussed are: Diocesan Guidelines, Assessments, Diocesan Departments, Role of the Dean and His Visits, Mentors, Clergy Taxes, Liturgical Matters. All new clergy are expected to attend. Further details will be sent out shortly.

Deacon/Subdeacon Workshop: February 18-19 at LGS. Review of Hierarchical Liturgy, The Vigil, as well as a discussion of diaconal ministry in the parish. Further details pending.

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“...departed this life before us, in hope of the Resurrection . . .”

reflections within the diocese on dying and burial as Orthodox Christians

“Death is the touchstone of our attitude to life. People who are afraid of death are afraid of life. . . . If we are afraid of death, we will never be prepared to take ultimate risks: we will spend our life in a cowardly, careful and timid manner. It is only if we can face death, make sense of it, define its place and our place in regard to it that we will be able to live to the fullness of our ability. Too often we wait until the end of our life to face death, whereas we would have lived quite differently if only we had faced death at the outset. Only awareness of death will give life this (necessary) immediacy and depth, will bring life to life, will make it so intense that it is totally summed up in the present moment” (Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, “On Death,” *Sobornost*, 1:2:79, pp. 8-9). Included in the booklet, Dying, Death and Burial in the Orthodox Church, published by St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Portland, OR.

**Church of the Annunciation, Milwaukee, OR,
establishes “Funeral Team”**

Shortly after Annunciation parish began its conversion to Orthodoxy, a young woman in our congregation died unexpectedly. Being new to the faith, we wanted to bury her in accordance with Orthodox tradition. The family and her loving women friends wanted to prepare her for burial and to see that all was done within the context of the church. They began to research Orthodox burial customs and to offer to assist families when a loved one died. As other members reposed, we learned difficult lessons about converts who die without expressing their wishes for an Orthodox funeral and whose non-Orthodox families would not allow an Orthodox funeral and insisted on cremation. When a member of our parish died following a long illness, without any funeral planning having been done, it became apparent that our parish needed to help members prepare for the end of their lives and not leave it all to our pastor or a family caught in the throes of grief. Out of these experiences has grown a ministry to parishioners that now involves assisting individuals and families in making their end-of-life decisions known as well as assisting in the burial process.

What began as a small group of ladies has grown into a broader ministry that assists our clergy and families in meeting the needs of parishioners who are ill or are at the end of their life. Coupled with the ministry of our parish nurse, the team assists members in completing advance directives, making funeral arrangements, documenting funeral plans, communicating their desires to those who will be responsible following their repose and organizing the support of our parish when someone is dying. Following death, the team member notifies the other committees within the church who will have funeral responsibilities. We do not attempt to supplant the spiritual preparation for dying that is inherent in the church or private counseling with one’s priest. Rather, we attempt to make our priest’s work easier by handling the more worldly details associated with an individual’s passing.

An outgrowth of our experience has been the creation of a packet called End-of-Life Care and Funeral Planning. It contains essential information regarding the decisions that should be made while one is healthy and includes the State of Oregon’s Advance Directives booklet. A form was written by the team to

consolidate the individual’s instructions for after death care and burial. Also, guidelines are provided for what the individual/family might expect from their clergy and church community following the repose of a loved one. Our parish has been able to avoid some common (and expensive) American practices, such as embalming, by using a funeral director familiar with Orthodox Christian burial practices. We recognize that many families would not choose to prepare their loved one for burial. However, having done so on many occasions we have found it to be a moving experience for those who do. We offer instructions for those who would like to do so. Future editions of the packet will include guidelines for a “Green Funeral” (provision of after death care and burial without the use of a funeral director), a growing practice on the West coast. We are offering this packet to the entire Orthodox community at the cost of printing and postage.

Within the last six months, our parish has had two individuals repose following struggles with terminal illnesses. Thankfully, our ministry was in place and was able to assist each family as the illness progressed towards death. One member of the team was asked to be the liaison between the family and the church community. They helped organize care and communicated the family’s needs for meals and visits to the parish. When death occurred, the team member helped the family with the after death details. This involved working closely with our pastor and with Hospice. In each situation, the extended families expressed heartfelt thanks and surprise that our community offered so much support to their loved ones.

An unexpected blessing of this ministry has been the witness of Christ’s love through the loving care of the church community to families unfamiliar with either Orthodoxy or Christianity. And non-Orthodox family members, who assisted in preparing a loved one for burial, have expressed that their initial reluctance became a deeply gratifying one as they grieved the loss of their loved one. We are able to offer these families options for care, and then assist them with their choices. As with any effort, ours is a work in progress and is constantly being evaluated and altered to meet the needs of individuals. But most importantly, it is an honor to share in the grace that comes as a brother or sister in Christ is preparing to leave this world for the next.

by Elizabeth Lien

The Death and Burial of an Orthodox Christian

by Maria Nash

Although there is no more personal a story than that of the death of a loved one, I am inspired to share some of the events that transpired in the passing of my husband, Isaac Nash, last year. While we had only seven years together, I do not regret my decision to be his wife. Our whole married life was spent at Raphael House as members of the live-in community of a dozen Orthodox Christian staff members plus volunteers who help run the shelter for homeless families in San Francisco. This Raphael House community and other family and friends helped me to care for Isaac in life, and after his death. We learned that we could handle the details ourselves, without a funeral home or director. Isaac's body was not embalmed. It went from his bed directly into a lovingly made coffin, into the church for services, and then directly to the monastery and his grave. I will briefly discuss his hospice care, our preparation and care for his body and the burial.

Hospice Care

In the beginning of hospice care I continued to work at my job, but stayed home with Isaac full time for the last weeks of his life. His hospice case manager came once per week and I could call for a nurse to come at any time. Hospice also provided an aid for a few hours per day during his last week. Also during the last six days, I hired a night nurse so that I could get some sleep.

I loved caring for Isaac, but it was trying and tiring. While I was his primary caregiver, in addition

to the hospice workers, I had a whole team of Raphael House staff, my church community, friends and family, backing me up. Amidst the difficulties of his illness a new world was revealed in the opening of so many hearts to Isaac and me. Carmela helped with nursing care, was on call during the night, and got anything that I needed, whether it was my morning coffee or a bandaid. Bob helped with lifting or anything else that was needed. He also was my right-hand person in thinking through all the details and making sure I had all the information and supplies needed for final preparations and burial. A Raphael House volunteer, David Costas, carried a beeper in the last weeks of Isaac's life and came every time I called to help me to move Isaac up in bed or for other lifting I could not do on my own. Matushka Angela let me use her car during the day to run errands, and was available for any help we needed. Our parish priest, Fr. Tom visited and brought the Holy Gifts to Isaac many times before his death. Connie gave both Isaac and me massages. Elena, Ralitza and others helped with laundry. I would

leave a load outside my door and later find it clean and folded. Fr. David made it possible for me to completely drop out from all my Raphael House responsibilities and duties. I'll never forget the day that Isaac needed to talk to a priest and Fr. David immediately came up to hear his confession. Matushka Elaine was trained to help with the nursing care, and offered loving support every time I saw her. My Mother came to my graduation the week after Isaac was diagnosed and he was already too sick to attend the ceremony. She visited again a few months later to be with us and offer her love and support, and once more at the end. Fr. Nicholas and Lucia came to San Francisco while Isaac's family was visiting and helped me to host them. Then they came again at the end, along with John, Ian, Gina and Sophia.

Although it's certainly unique to live in an Orthodox community like Raphael House, where there is so much support readily available, hospice also works in regular home situations all the time.



Preparing for Burial

The process of gathering information to prepare Isaac's body

for burial was gradual. Isaac was drawn to an article in the July/August 2004 AARP Magazine on the "green" burial movement and expressed interest in this for his own burial. Green burials are legal and meet all state regulations and health requirements, but without embalming, making everything safely biodegradable and, therefore, environmentally friendly. (Green Graveyards: A Natural Way to Go -- For black-and-white reprints of this article call (800) 635-7181, ext. 8158 or check the internet (http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourlife/Articles/a2004-06-30-green_graveyards.html).

I never knew that refraining from embalming was an option. Like most, probably, I thought it was required by law. I discovered that this is not true--at least not in California and most states. A mortuary employee told us that "it is a law that a body must be either refrigerated or embalmed before 24 hours after death." This is not true either. I also learned that embalming is

(Death and Burial, continued on page 12.)

(Death and Burial, continued from page 11.)

not a traditional Orthodox practice from the material prepared by Fr. George Gray's parishioners of the St. Elizabeth Committee of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Portland, Oregon, entitled RESOURCES in Preparation for Dying, Death and Burial. This publication states, "The procedure that takes place in the 'prep room' of contemporary American mortuaries is one that, quite simply put, is an offence to the temple of the Holy Spirit that our bodies are considered to be. Nonetheless, most Orthodox Christians are embalmed." (<http://www.saintnicholas.org/articles/SaintNicholasChurchResourcesBooklet.pdf>). Finally, in August 2004, I saw a portion of a documentary on PBS about home funerals, about people involved with the organization Final Passages (described below).

In September 2004, Isaac indicated he wanted to have a meeting with his confessor, Fr. Jonah Paffhausen, Bob Harrison and Tulio Vasquez who would help us with this process. Fr. Jonah told us about the prayer services and how they would proceed, and that we would not need to use a mortician or funeral home, but only had to complete and file two forms. He told us that parishioners from St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in San Anselmo, California had further information on how to prepare a body for burial. They sent me their one page sheet on 'directions for preparing a body for burial'. It includes names and numbers of people to call for more information, which led me to the organization called Final Passages (<http://www.finalpassages.org>). I ordered the manual that they offered. This manual, and the information from San Anselmo and St. Nicholas' in Portland, were my guides to understanding how to care for a body, and the supplies and information that we needed to get together ahead of time. After reading them, we became committed to the idea of bypassing embalming and doing it all ourselves.

We purchased the casket ahead of time from the monks of the Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco in Point Reyes, California. (<http://www.monasteryofstjohn.org/Caskets.php>) Our friend, Emily Newbury, devoted a whole Saturday to lovingly decorate the casket with padding, satin material and ornate edging. A group of young Raphael House volunteers, Naomi, Rachel, and David, along with Bob, Tulio and Christopher, made a trip to Platina, California to dig Isaac's grave at the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery. Even though Isaac had visited this monastery only once before he was sick, he was sure he wanted to be buried there. After getting his

approval, Abbot Gerasim directed Isaac to write a letter stating his intention and request to have his resting place at the Monastery.

At the End

Isaac looked beautiful and natural in repose. It may not have been that way if he had been embalmed. Nor would we have had the opportunity to show our love for him by preparing his body: to wash and anoint it, and give it back to the earth in his natural form. Having his body with us for three days allowed us to continue to look, to touch, to kiss, and to begin to accept the reality of his death. Being separated from his physical presence at that time would have made that more difficult.

Within the first hour after his repose

As we respect the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit in life, so we are able to do after death as well. It can be a blessing for everyone who participates. In Isaac's case, after his spirit passed, we immediately gathered and said the Panikhida prayer service, followed by our preparation of his body. I directed the process, and Isaac's son, Lawrence, Bob Harrison, and John Garner, along with the help of a nurse, washed and anointed him, put on his baptismal robe, and placed his body into the casket. At the same time, Fr. Nicholas read the Psalter, while others prayed and helped as they could.

The coffin was then taken downstairs and placed in the Chapel of the Archangels at Raphael House with his feet facing the altar. Interspersed with divine services, for two days Psalms



were chanted around the clock as people took turns keeping vigil.

The first evening was the Vigil for the Departed. The following night, the choir of monks from The Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco sang the funeral service with Fr. Jonah, Fr. Nicholas Letten, Fr. David Lowell, and our parish priest, Fr. Thomas Alessandroni, (Synaxis of the Theotokos Mission). The Liturgy was served the following morning. Isaac's body was then taken to St. Herman's Monastery in Platina, where Abbot Fr. Gerasim, Fr. David Shank and others participated in the burial. Fr. Tom offered a loving graveside homily. Many put a shovel of dirt over the casket after it was lowered down, and Isaac's son, Lawrence and Larry (Maria's brother) worked until after the sun went down to fill in the six foot grave.

Dr. Roth

"I love you. Forgive me. I forgive you!" Dr. Roth told Isaac that this was what he needed to say to people when he learned he had liver cancer. Dr. Roth was the one who broke the news of his cancer to us, visited Isaac at home, and came over to sign the forms for me after his death. It has proven so true and helpful what Dr. Roth told me: that mourning is not a linear process, it is OK to feel joy and happiness when it comes, and that sorrow will take its own course.

A Glimpse of Isaac

Close friends of Isaac's wrote to me soon after his death, "We have met few if any that our Lord has blessed with the gifts that Isaac had with his relationships with people. People of all ages. It just didn't matter to Isaac who you were or how old or young you were, he just gave you a big portion of God's love whenever he was around you."

I found another example of Isaac's generous and evangelical spirit recently when I came across a Christmas card which he wrote to his daughter and her husband, that for some reason did not get mailed. "Dear Connie & Elvis, May Christ, Mary's Baby Boy find welcome anew and afresh in your hearts this Christmas. Though it was a manger He was laid in that night in Bethlehem, He came to this world to dwell in you and me, all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. Glorify Him in your hearts as Lord and Savior. Magnify Him as King and God!"

As this card shows, Isaac never lost an opportunity to express his love and faith in Christ. At his end he faced his illness and impending death with this same courage and faith. He took this final opportunity seriously and was able, by God's grace, to use his last days as a time of cleansing and prayer. His concern was for those he left behind. He inspired all of us who had the good fortune to serve him at the end of his life. Even in the last few days when he could no longer talk and was just resting, tenderness and light seemed to come out of his pores like the glow of a full moon. He continued to love us until the end, and our faith tells us that he still does, and we continue to love him with the prayers that the church has given us to offer up for his soul. Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, grant rest to thy servant Isaac!

Note: Based mostly on the material from Final Passages, I have prepared a much longer article with practical details on how to prepare and to take care of a loved one's body after death, including information on filling out the government forms in California. I'd be happy to send this to anyone. Email: mnash@raphaelhouse.org or call (415) 474-4621.

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Memory Eternal!**Alexandra Garklavs**

[TOCA Communications] -Mrs. Alexandra Garklavs, 77, wife of the Very Rev. Sergei Garklavs, dean emeritus of Holy Trinity Cathedral here, fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, July 9, 2005.

Born Alexandra Iowina in Belarus in 1927, she came to the US in 1949 and was employed as a nurse. The following year she married Sergei Garklavs, who was subsequently ordained to the diaconate and priesthood. For years she served alongside her husband at Holy Virgin Protection Church, Gary, IN; Saint Panteleimon Church, Argo, IL; and Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago. She also accompanied her husband and members of the Garklavs family to Russia in 2004 for the return of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, for which Father Garklavs had served as guardian after the repose of Archbishop John of Chicago.

In addition to her husband, Mrs. Garklavs is survived by three sons, the Very Rev. Alexander Garklavs, rector of Holy Trinity Church, East Meadow, NY, and George and Paul Garklavs; two daughters, Mary Smith and Olga Prevas; and eleven grandchildren.

Visitation was held at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, on Monday and Tuesday, July 11 and 12th. Funeral services were celebrated at the cathedral on Wednesday, July 13th. Interment followed at Elmwood Cemetery, River Grove, IL. Donations in her memory may be made to the Tikhvin Monastery

Archimandrite Hilary (Madison)

Archimandrite Hilary (Madison), at one time a priest of our diocese and recently retired to St. Tikhon Monastery, passed away on Sunday, August 14th, 2005.

May his memory be eternal!

Victor Gromadski

Victor Andreevich Gromadski, fell asleep in the Lord at 12:30 p.m., Thanksgiving afternoon, 2005.

Archpriest Victor Sokolov, dean of Holy Trinity cathedral in San Francisco, where Mr. Gromadski attended, notes: "It was a joy and an honor to know this gentle man. *May his memory be eternal!*"

The funeral took place at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Monday morning, Nov. 28th, at 10 AM, with a Panikhida on Sunday evening. The casket was then brought to the church, where the faithful were welcomed to read Psalms over the body.

May his memory be eternal!

Historical Perspective

Orthodoxy in Seattle

*The following, the last of four segments featured in *The Vision*, was prepared in 1985, on the occasion of Seattle's St. Spiridon Cathedral's 90th anniversary.*

... Saint Spiridon's continues to participate in the summer camp run by the Northwest Orthodox Youth Foundation under the direction of Father Anthony Tomaras and George Plumis. All Saints' Camp has become a year-round retreat and conference center. Many Saint Spiridon's parishioners got a chance to see it this year when the parish picnic, held for the past several years at Seward Park in Seattle, was moved to Raft Island. Approximately seventy people came for Sunday Liturgy in the camp's chapel. Potluck lunch and games followed. In the happy phrase of one person, "It is like having our very own dacha."

Under impetus of several parishioners, money was invested in a basic stock of Orthodox books in order to establish a permanent bookstore. Eventually two bookcases with glass doors replaced the original storage trunk. In response to growing interest and demand, the bookstore's stock tripled and Saint Spiridon's was asked to provide books for the Bazaars of three other area churches. Saint Spiridon's Bookstore currently under the aegis of Alan Mack, George Wanaski, and Robert Koch, is looking forward to moving into new, larger quarters and to being open during the week on a commercial basis.

In line with other changes in the furnishing of the church, the large icon of the Resurrection in the altar, which had been damaged by its icon lamp, was restored, and its permanent fixing to the wall of the apse was redone in a frame matching the design of the iconostasis. At the same time the analogia were replaced with new stands designed by Eugene Bivoino to match the design he drew for the iconostasis. Ten thousand dollars was given for this project.

In 1985, the Sitka Mother of God icon again blessed the parish with its presence. Among other events of that year, the parish hosted the first meeting of the Diocesan Assembly to be held in the Northwest. The Diocesan Assembly met at Palisades Retreat Center in Dash Point Father Vadim Pogrebniak

was elected to the Metropolitan Council of the OCA, and lay delegate, Irene Barinoff, was elected to the Diocesan Council.

As can be seen from this brief history, the community of Saint Spiridon's consists of unity in diversity. White Russians of the First Emigration from Western Europe and Harbin, Manchuria; many Slavic nationalities from the Second Emigration after World War II; native Alaskan populations present in the parish

since its inception; and a multitude of nationalities among the converts: all commune and pray together. The latter two groups will be described briefly to impart their unique contributions to the cathedral community.

James Michener was quoted in a local newspaper recently as saying that the history of Alaska cannot be understood without understanding the place that Seattle plays in that history. For Saint Spiridon's the reverse is equally true; the original Saint Spiridon's on Lakeview Boulevard was financed in part by contributions from virtually every Orthodox parish in Alaska. As far back as anyone can remember,



Saint Spiridon's has been enriched with many new parishioners who have arrived from Alaska. Newcomers from Alaska have been both native Alaskan Orthodox and members of Russian families who settled there more recently.

The greater educational and employment opportunities in metropolitan Seattle have drawn many, as have the need for medical care and a more congenial climate in which to retire. In the latter regard, Saint Spiridon's has provided an altar for several retired priests: Father Paul Shadura from Kenai in the 1950s; Father Hilary Gromof from the Pribilof Islands in the late 1970s; and currently Father Michael Lestenkof from Saint George's Island, in the Pribilofs.

During the 1970s and 1980s Saint Spiridon's was greatly

blessed by the ministry of Protodeacon John Garcia of Juneau. Forced by poor health to retire early, he nonetheless, served at nearly every service held in the church. Known in nearly every Orthodox parish in the area, his love for God was apparent to people of all ages. His sudden death in February of 1985 saddened the parish, and the church was filled with mourners at his funeral. The loss all felt was summed up by a pre-school parishioner who repeated throughout the service, "My friend is dead, my friend is dead."

Whatever their reason for coming, Alaskans currently constitute about one-third of the active membership of Saint Spiridon's, and are involved on every level of parish life. Indeed, one of the most striking additions to our parish bazaar in recent years has been an Alaskan Booth serving native Alaskan food and selling books on Orthodox Alaska and its saints. The Alaskan religious presence at Saint Spiridon's Cathedral is perhaps beautifully symbolized by the relics of Saint Herman (placed in the new altar when it was consecrated by Bishop Basil) which to this day exude the "odor of sanctity."

A final community of Saint Spiridon's parish is the WASO—White Anglo-Saxon Orthodox—group. Orthodoxy in Seattle began attracting those who were neither Slavic nor Greek in national origin in the 1920s at Saint Demetrios' and in the 1930s at Saint Spiridon's. There were several ways that the first few came into contact with the Orthodox faith. Some became aware of Orthodoxy through Orthodox people who shared their faith with them. Others were introduced to Orthodoxy by marrying a person of the Orthodox faith.¹⁵ Lastly, some, having found their own churches theologically intolerable, began looking elsewhere and either read about the Orthodox Church in books or heard about it from sympathetic and knowledgeable non-Orthodox.

Some converts experienced several of these tugs toward Orthodoxy simultaneously. One person, for instance, shocked when the pastor of her church questioned the virginity of the Theotokos, immediately began looking elsewhere, at the time, she met the man whom she shortly married who was, in the providence of God, Orthodox. In inquiring about his faith she happily found a church committed to maintaining the traditional beliefs of Christianity without change.

By 1965 Saint Spiridon's had about eight convert members active in all parts of parish life. Most have happy memories of

warm acceptance and moving services. The choir, conducted at that time by Mr. Juskaeff, made a wonderful impression on newcomers who universally were spiritually moved by the uplifting services. Jim Gordon, for instance, recalls the enthusiastic and joyful celebration of the Liturgy at Pascha as the turning point in his conversion. Margaret Gradalins recalls the pleasure of being frequently asked to go up to the iconostasis to lead the Creed in English.

The growing theological and liturgical liberalism in most "mainline" American churches in the 1960s and 1970s, led more people to seek out Orthodoxy as a place where the time-honored teachings of the Christian faith and the reverent celebration of Christian worship were not going to be abandoned. By 1979, there were about fifteen active converts in the parish. That year, Irene Barinoff was asked by Father Paul Jeromsky to hold a catechumen class, and twelve people were chrismated in May, 1980. Since that time there have been two or three persons a year joining (out of about twice as many who inquire seriously about the Orthodox faith). As of this time (1985)

there are about thirty-five converts active in the life of Saint Spiridon's Cathedral.

Currently Saint Spiridon's Cathedral Parish celebrates the full cycle of services for the liturgical year. Services continue to be well-attended. Participation in church activities and educational opportunities remain steady. The Sisterhood continues to provide support for the parish's social and philanthropic endeavors. The Sunday School boasts an enrollment of fifty-five students and five teachers. The

choir brings pride to the Church through the range of its repertoire, the beauty of its execution, and its ability to sing the services in two languages without visible strain. The parish regularly attends to the needs of the needy, both within and without its walls. Lastly, the parish is poised on the brink of a great future founded on the sacrifices of those "founders and benefactors of this holy temple...who here lie asleep in the Lord" they served.

As the well-known French proverb puts it, "The more things change the more they stay the same." Saint Spiridon's started as a mixture of several cultures and languages and in time became the home of pious Russians fleeing Soviet tyranny. Saint Spiridon's has become again, a mixture of cultures and languages. For many, the beauty and reverence of worship, and the matter-of-fact living out of the beliefs and moral values of the Gospels which characterize the form Orthodoxy assumed in the Slavic lands (and, in its own distinctive way, in Alaska), are very attractive. God has truly made good come from evil by

(Seattle, continued on page 16.)

15 Though the Greek parishes have had better results and Holy Trinity, Wilkeson, has been largely built up through conversions at marriage. Saint Spiridon's gained relatively few this way; in most cases, the Orthodox member left the church.

(Seattle, continued from page 15.)

sending this beauty to America. In this age which prizes everything above spiritual riches and mocks nothing so much as a pious life, we at Saint Spiridon's have a priceless treasure to share with a world which hungers for the values it often seems to despise.

Now we face the task of integrating that which is best in American church life with this gift so that this healing life can be made available to as many as possible. Already Saint Spiridon's has been the source of four other Orthodox parishes in Seattle, has assisted in various ways the congregation at Wilkeson, and is contemplating a mission in the Everett area. As we look ahead to our one-hundredth anniversary we face many challenges.

May all be done to the glory of God!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation of this parish history would have been impossible, had it not been for Father Vasily Kuvshinoff's and his daughter, Ludmilla Kuvshinoff's earlier work. Many thanks are owed them for the efforts they made in preserving the story of the life of Saint Spiridon's parish.

More recently the dedication of Mr. John Kovtunovich, Mr. and Mrs. (Alexei M. and Olga P.) Shane, Dr. Elaine Ryan, Tom Dykstra, Gordon Millikan, Alan Mack, Irene Barinoff, Terence and Margaret Foster-Finan, and Robert Koch has helped to keep the unique story of Saint Spiridon's parish alive and interesting to its community.

The assistance of the OCA archivist, Father Dennis Rhodes, is much appreciated, also.

Finally, the Harbin stories of Mr. and Mrs. Shane and of Olga Georgievna Kashirin, as well as the memories of the impetus for celebration of the 90th anniversary-Saint Spiridon's would not be what it is today without that "strong, Russian blood", and the fact that many of our Harbinites will still be with us at the celebration on December 15, 1985, is a joyful one for us. May God grant them many, many more years of fruitful work in His vineyard!

90th Anniversary Committee
Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Spiridon
Seattle, Washington
1985

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Appointments, Transfers, Announcements

The Right Reverend BENJAMIN Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon Andrew Timothy Jacobs to the Holy Diaconate through the laying on of hands at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, on April 23, '05. Deacon Andrew has returned to St. Tikhon Seminary to complete the academic year and awaits assignment.

The Right Reverend BENJAMIN Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon Alexander Vallens to the Holy Diaconate through the laying on of hands at Holy Transfiguration Cathedral, Denver, CO, on May 14, '05.

The Right Reverend BENJAMIN Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon John Beal to the Holy Diaconate through the laying on of hands at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, on May 21, '05.

The Right Reverend BENJAMIN Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon Daniel Armatas to the Holy Diaconate through the laying on of hands on Friday, June 10, '05, and to the Holy Priesthood on Saturday, June 11, '05, at St. Spiridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA.

On Sunday, June 20, 2004, His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, ordained the Deacon Yuri Maev to the Holy Priesthood through the laying on my hands at Holy

Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco. Father Yuri was assigned the same date as Acting Rector of the new Orthodox Mission of Fremont, California.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Deacon Andrew Jacobs to the Holy Priesthood on July 29, '05, at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon Dmitri Perez to the Holy Diaconate on Friday, July 29, '05, and to the Holy Priesthood on Saturday, July 30, '05, at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, ordained the Subdeacon Isidor Mayol to the Holy Diaconate on Saturday, July 30, '05, and to the Holy Priesthood on Sunday, July 31, '05, at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Archpriest Alexander Shkalow, having been released to the Diocese of the West by SERAPHIM, Bishop of Ottawa and Canada on September 6, '05, is assigned to St. Nicholas Church, San Diego, CA and appointed Rector. At the same time, Archpriest Lawrence Russell is released from all responsibilities relative to his designation as Priest-in-Charge.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Protodeacon Alexis Washington, having been released to the Diocese of the West by JOB, Archbishop of Chicago and The Midwest, on October 11, '05, is attached to SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, transferred the Deacon Mark Becker from St. Spiridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA, to the St. Elizabeth Mission, Poulsbo, WA, effective December 8, '05.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, transferred the Deacon Michael Isenberg from the Holy Apostles Mission, Portland, OR, to SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ, effective December 8, '05.

On behalf of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Bishop of Berkeley, transferred the Deacon Michael Savko from St. Gabriel the Archangel Mission, Ashland, OR, to St. Herman Church, Oxnard, CA, effective December 8, '05.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the priest Thomas Renfree is relieved of all responsibility as Priest-in-Charge of the St. Susanna Mission, Sonora, CA, effective December 8, '05, the Priest Andrew Jacobs having been assigned Acting Rector.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Archpriest Matthew Tate is relieved from responsibility relative to his assignment as Priest-in-Charge of the St. Catherine Mission, Kirkland, WA, effective December 8,

'05, the Priest John Strickland having been appointed Acting Rector.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Archpriest Matthew Tate is relieved from responsibility relative to his assignment as Priest-in-Charge of the St. Nicholas of South Canaan Mission, Billings, MO, effective December 8, '05, the Archpriest John Mancantelli having been appointed Acting Rector.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Archpriest Matthew Tate is relieved from responsibility relative to his assignment as Priest-in-Charge of the St. Christina of Tyre Mission, Fremont, CA, effective December 8, '05, the Priest Michael Anderson having been appointed Acting Rector.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Priest John Ramos is relieved of all responsibility relative to the St. Innocent Mission, Eureka, CA, and is transferred and attached to the Protection of the Holy Virgin Church, Santa Rosa, CA, effective December 8, '05. At the same time, he is granted a leave of absence for thirty days: a leave which may be extended for a period of thirty days by written request. The St. Innocent Mission will be administered by the Dean of the Missionary District Deanery and served by area clergy.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Priest Michael Rome is attached to the Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, Sacramento, CA in retirement, effective December 8, '05. The SS. Cyril and Methodius Mission, Chico, CA, will be administered by the Dean of the Missionary District Deanery.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Priest Lawrence Gaudreauth is relieved of all responsibility as Priest-in-Charge of St. Peter the Aleut Mission of Lake Havasu City, AZ, effective December 8, '05. That mission will continue to be administered by the Dean of the Missionary District Deanery. Priest Damian Kuolt is assigned Priest-in-Charge.

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West, the Mission of St. John of Kronstadt, Reno, NV is deactivated (dissolved until further notice), effective December 14, '05, and the Missionary Dean is to take custody of the Sacred Items. The Rector of the Mission, the Priest Hilarion Frakes, is at the same time transferred and attached to the Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, Sacramento, CA.

(Appointments, etc., continued on page 18.)

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(Appointments, etc., continued from page 17.)

From the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Cathedral

San Francisco, CA

September 22, 2005

Published with the blessing of His Grace TIKHON, Bishop of San Francisco

Dear friends,

Some time ago, we learned with infinite regret that our beloved pastor of fourteen years, Archpriest Victor Sokolov, is terminally ill. Although, by the mercy of God, Father Victor still can celebrate some Divine services and preach, his strength is diminishing and he requires more and more care. While hospice nurses attend to his medical needs, Matushka Barbara has had to take a leave of absence from her work at school in order to be at his side...

Father Victor and Matushka Barbara have five children and one grandchild, and three of their children are still at home.

To assist them at this most difficult time to meet the growing financial demands upon the family, the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Cathedral has established a fund to which parishioners, friends, and members of other communities may contribute.

If you, as individuals or collectively, should wish to express your solidarity and sympathy with the Sokolov family, you may send your checks to:

Holy Trinity Cathedral
Att. Treasurer
1520 Green Street
San Francisco, CA 94123-5102

Please make your check out to "Holy Trinity Cathedral," and make a notation on the memo line of your check that it is intended for the "Sokolov Family Fund"; be sure to include your name and address in order that we may gratefully acknowledge your contribution at the end of the year.

We urge you to make this letter generally available to your community to allow the widest participation possible.

And please keep Father Victor, Matushka Barbara and the entire Sokolov family in your prayers.

Yours in Christ,

Johann Allen Morse
Vice-President
Parish council, Holy Trinity Cathedral

Next issue of the Orthodox Vision:

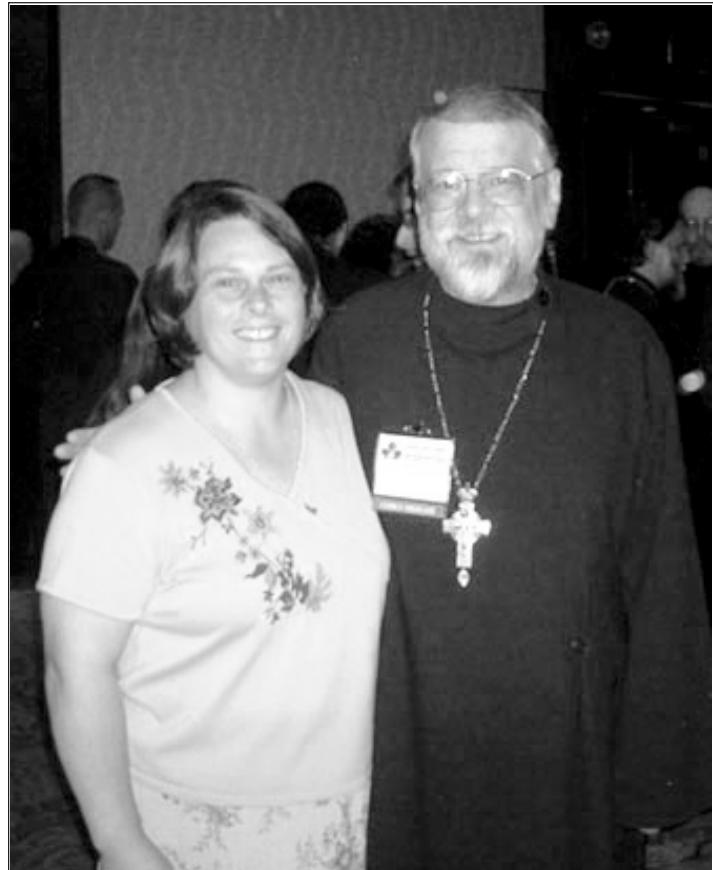
First installment of interview with Fr. Victor Sokolov, conducted September 23, 2005, at his home in Healdsburg, CA..

Reverend Fathers and Faithful:

I want to ask you to continue keeping Archpriest Victor Sokolov and his family in your prayers. The cancer continues to progress after a period of respite.

Asking God's blessing on you all.

+Bishop Benjamin



Fr. Victor and Barbara Sokolov, July 2005

Addendum to the Story, "Helping the Homeless Elderly in Ethiopia," Spring, 2005, *Orthodox Vision*

With regard to the many sacrifices made by Tsige-Roman Gobezie in her work on behalf of homeless elderly in Ethiopia, His Grace Bp. TIKHON was eager to point out that her greatest sacrifice may be the fact that she has embraced the doctrine of the Fourth Ecumenical Council concerning the two-natures in the one person of Jesus Christ--a decision that separates her from the Monophysite Christianity of her homeland, Ethiopia. This means she is only able to partake of the Holy Mysteries on those occasions when she is in the United States.

Ask Father Joseph

The Rector of Denver's Transfiguration Cathedral and dean of the Rocky Mountain District, Fr. Joseph Hirsch, answers your questions.

Dear Fr. Joseph: Why can't my Episcopalian cousin and my best friend who belongs to the "Church of God" be godparents to my children in the Orthodox Church?

Let's flip your question over for a moment. Sometimes Orthodox people will ask me, "Is it all right for me to be a godparent for my best friend's new baby? We grew up together and have been close all of our lives, so I don't want to hurt her feelings." When this occurs, the first thing I ask is, "Do you know what you'll be asked to do as a sponsor?" Usually the answer is "No." In fact, most churches, be they

Roman Catholic, Protestant or Uniate, which practice infant baptism and have godparents, are slightly similar to our Orthodox Church in this matter. This is because all historic Christian churches grew out of choices made by those who wished either to deny part of the Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Faith or who chose to add something to it. The word "heresy" which makes many people nervous, is just an English form of the Greek word *airesis*, which has to do with a choice made or a thing chosen. One of the things which these churches share with the Orthodox is that in the baptismal service, the godparents are expected to answer for the child and make a profession of faith. Obviously the profession of faith in a church which has chosen to add to or subtract from

the Orthodox faith, will either state or imply beliefs which, however well meant, are different from Orthodox beliefs. For example, Roman Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit is a secondary product of the relationship of God the Father and God the Son, whereas we hold to the faith of the Church expressed in the Creed and Holy Scripture (St John 14:25-26) that the Holy Spirit is Eternal and proceeds eternally from God the Father. Methodists do not believe that they receive "new life" in Holy Baptism but, rather, consider it a kind of "dedication" in which a little water, or even a handful of rose petals, is sprinkled on the child. While these are only a couple of examples, and I could give dozens, it should be clear from these that an Orthodox Christian who is sponsor to a Roman Catholic or Protes-

tant child would be asked to say or agree to many things, in the child's name which he or she, the sponsor, did not believe. In these cases, I usually suggest that the Orthodox person offer be an "honorary" godparent. This could involve being present at, but not participating in the actual service, or attending a reception but not the baptism, purchasing a nice gift, perhaps an Orthodox Study Bible or an icon, and praying for the child throughout his life. Please be aware that even attending a non-Orthodox service is questionable and should certainly be done only with the knowledge and permission of one's priest. Now to deal with your question: If we, as Orthodox Christians would not want to be made into hypocrites and liars by being required to take vows and recite creeds in which we did not believe, how can we ask or allow our friends and relatives who are not Orthodox to do the same things? If they don't care, they should! If they believe what we believe, they should become Orthodox. What we need is a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Orthodox godparent. A baptismal sponsor assumes a special relationship to and responsibility for his or her godchild. This in-



Commanding the Elements, Feast of Theophany

volves an obligation to nurture the child spiritually, to pray for him or her every day, to supervise his or her religious education, and should, God forbid, some tragedy overtake his or her parents, to be willing to assist in providing support. I know several Orthodox believers in their sixties to eighties, who were raised by *Kumovi* (godparents) after their natural parents died in an epidemic or tragic accident. Indeed, the Holy Church teaches us that our godparents who assisted in bringing us to the supernatural light and everlasting life, are more closely related to us than are our own "birth parents," who were used by God to bring us to the natural light and physical birth. For two reasons,

(Ask Fr. Joseph, continued on page 20.)

(Ask Fr. Joseph, continued from page 19.)

then, because it is unfair to ask our non-Orthodox friends to repeat creeds and promises which they do not believe, mean or even understand, and also, because it is unwise to expect a non-Orthodox person to take responsibility for the religious training of an Orthodox child, the Church requires that we have baptismal sponsors who are not only Orthodox in name but who sincerely hold and practice the faith and regularly receive the mysteries (sacraments) of the Church. I would suggest that you ask your friend and cousin to study the baptismal service with you and to stand with the family during the service as additional witnesses. In this way you will save them from embarrassment and hypocrisy, and your child from having a sponsor who is unable to fulfill his or her obligations. Who knows? By showing that your faith makes a difference in this way, you may even help bring your cousin or friend and their families to the Orthodox Faith and the blessings of the fullness of Christ's True Church.

Discourse On the Day of the Baptism of Christ, by Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

Obtained from WWW.OCA.ORG (Abridged)

We shall now say something about the present feast. Many celebrate the feastdays and know their designations, but the cause for which they were established they know not. Thus concerning this, that the present feast is called Theophany — everyone knows; but what this is — Theophany, and whether it be one thing or another, they know not. And this is shameful — every year to celebrate the feastday and not know its reason.

First of all therefore, it is necessary to say that there is not one Theophany, but two: the one actual, which already has occurred, and the second in future, which will happen with glory at the end of the world. About this one and about the other you will hear today from Paul, who in conversing with Titus, speaks thus about the present: "The grace of God hath revealed itself, having saved all mankind, decreeing, that we reject iniquity and worldly desires, and dwell in the present age in prudence and in righteousness and piety" — and about the future: "awaiting the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:11-13). And a prophet speaks thus about this latter: "the sun shalt turn to darkness, and the moon to blood at first, then shalt come the great and illuminating Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31).

Why is not that day, on which the Lord was born, considered Theophany — but rather this day on which He was baptised? . . . Because Christ made Himself known to all — not then when He was born — but then when He was baptised. Until this time He was not known to the people. And that the people did

not know Him, Who He was, listen about this to John the Baptist, who says: "Amidst you standeth, Him Whom ye know not of" (Jn.1:26). And is it surprising that others did not know Him, when even the Baptist did not know Him until that day? "And I — said he — knew Him not: but He that did send me to baptise with water, about This One did tell unto me: over Him that shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, This One it is Who baptiseth in the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 1:33). . . .

There was a Jewish baptism, which cleansed from bodily impurities, but not to remove sins. Thus, whoever committed adultery, or decided on thievery, or who did some other kind of misdeed, it did not free him from guilt. But whoever touched the bones of the dead, whoever tasted food forbidden by the law, whoever approached from contamination, whoever consortied with lepers — that one washed, and until evening was impure, and then cleansed. "Let one wash his body in pure water — it says in the Scriptures, — and he will be unclean until evening, and then he will be clean" (Lev 15:5, 22:4). This was not truly of sins or impurities, but since the Jews lacked perfection, then God, accomplishing it by means of this greater piety, prepared them by their beginnings for a precise observance of important things. Thus, Jewish cleansings did not free from sins, but only from bodily impurities. Not so with ours: it is far more sublime and it manifests a great grace, whereby it sets free from sin, it cleanses the spirit and bestows the gifts of the Spirit. And the baptism of John was far more sublime than the Jewish, but less so than ours: it was like a bridge between both baptisms, leading across itself from the first to the last.

Wherefore John did not give guidance for observance of bodily purifications, but together with them he exhorted and advised to be converted from vice to good deeds and to trust in the hope of salvation and the accomplishing of good deeds, rather than in different washings and purifications by water. John did not say: wash your clothes, wash your body, and ye will be pure, but what? — "bear ye fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt 3:8). Since it was more than of the Jews, but less than ours: the baptism of John did not impart the Holy Spirit and it did not grant forgiveness by grace: it gave the commandment to repent, but it was powerless to absolve sins. Wherefore John did also say: "I baptise you with water...That One however will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt 3:11). . . .

Now it is necessary to say, for whom was Christ baptised and by which baptism? Neither the former the Jewish, nor the last — ours. Whence hath He need for remission of sins, how is this possible for Him, Who hath not any sins? "Of sin, — it says in the Scriptures, — worked He not, nor was there deceit found in His mouth" (1 Pet 2:22); and further, "who of you convicteth Me of Sin?" (Jn 8:46). And His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit; how might this be possible, when it in the beginning was fashioned by the Holy Spirit? And so, if His flesh was privy to the Holy Spirit, and He was not subject to sins, then for whom was He baptised? But first of all it is necessary for us to recognise, by which baptism He was baptised, and then it will be clear for

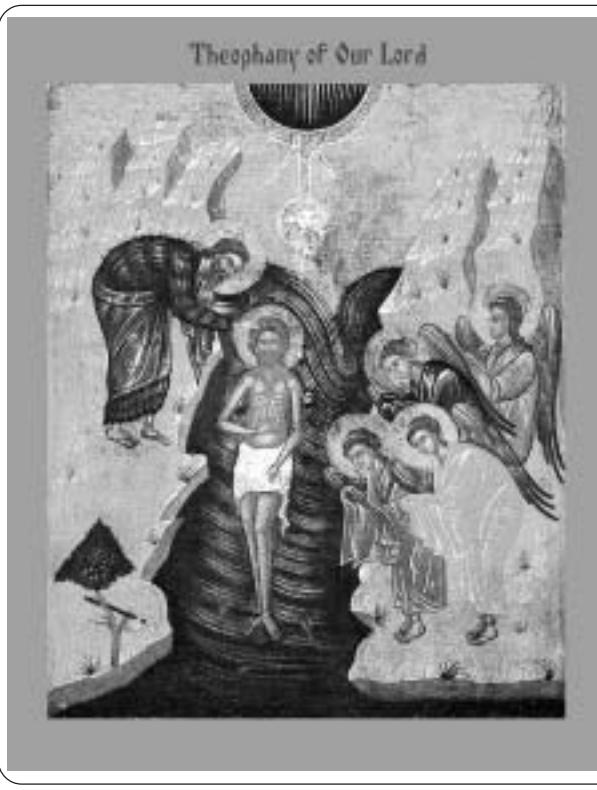
us. By which baptism indeed was He baptised? — Not the Jewish, nor ours, nor John's. For whom, since thou from thine own aspect of baptism dost perceive, that He was baptised not by reason of sin and not having need of the gift of the Spirit; therefore, as we have demonstrated, this baptism was alien to the one and to the other. Hence it is evident, that He came to Jordan not for the forgiveness of sins and not for receiving the gifts of the Spirit. But so that some from those present then should not think, that He came for repentance like others, listen to how John precluded this. What he then spoke to the others then was: "Bear ye fruits worthy of repentance"; but listen what he said to Him: "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" (Mt 3:8, 14). With these words he demonstrated, that Christ came to him not through that need with which people came, and that He was so far from the need to be baptised for this reason — so much more sublime and perfectly purer than Baptism itself. For whom was He baptised, if this was done not for repentance, nor for the remission of sins, nor for receiving the gifts of the Spirit? Through the other two reasons, of which about the one the disciple speaks, and about the other He Himself spoke to John. Which reason of this baptism did John declare? Namely, that Christ should become known to the people, as Paul also mentions: "John therefore baptised with the baptism of repentance, so that through him they should believe on Him that cometh" (Acts 19:4); this was the consequence of the baptism. . . .

And there is a second reason, about which He Himself spoke — what exactly is it? When John said: "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and Thou art come to me?" — He answered thus: "stay now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill every righteousness" (Mt 3:14-15). Dost thou see the meekness of the servant? Dost thou see the humility of the Master? What does He mean: "to fulfill every righteousness?" By righteousness is meant the fulfillment of all the commandments, as is said: "both were righteous, walking faultlessly in the commandments of the Lord" (Lk 1:6). Since fulfilling this righteousness was necessary for all people — but no one of them kept it or fulfilled it — Christ came then and fulfilled this righteousness. . . . Thus, if obedience to God constitutes righteousness, and God sent John to baptise the nation, then Christ has also fulfilled this along with all the other commandments.

. . . Such was the reason for His baptism — wherefore they should see, that He had fulfilled all the law — both this reason and also that, about which was spoken of before. Wherefore

also the Spirit did descend as a dove: because where there is reconciliation with God — there also is the dove. So also in the ark of Noah the dove did bring the branch of olive — a sign of God's love of mankind and of the cessation of the flood. And now in the form of a dove, and not in a body — this particularly deserves to be noted — the Spirit descended, announcing the universal mercy of God and showing with it, that the spiritual man needs to be gentle, simple and innocent, as Christ also says: "Except ye be converted and become as children, ye shall not enter into the Heavenly Kingdom" (Mt 18:3). But that ark, after the cessation of the flood, remained upon the earth; this ark, after the cessation of wrath, is taken to heaven, and now this Immaculate and Imperishable Body is situated at the right hand of the Father.

Having made mention about the Body of the Lord, I shall also say a little about this, and then the conclusion of the talk. Many now will approach the Holy Table on the occasion of the feast. But some approach not with trembling, but shoving, hitting others, blazing with anger, shouting, cursing, roughing it up with their fellows with great confusion. What, tell me, art thou troubled by, my fellow? What disturbeth thee? Do urgent affairs, for certain, summon thee? . . . Having been invited to supper, thou, although satiated before others, would not dare to leave before others while others are still reclining. But here, when the sacred doings are going on, thou at the very middle would pass by everything and leave? Is it for a worthy excuse? What excuse might it be? Judas, having communed that last evening on that final night, left hastily then as all the others were still



reclining.

Here these also are in imitation of him, who leave before the final blessing! If he had not gone, then he would not have made the betrayal; if he did not leave his co-disciples, then he would not have perished; if he had not removed himself from the flock, then the wolf would not have seized and devoured him alone; if he had separated himself from the Pastor, then he would not have made himself the prey of wild beasts. . . . We should, beloved, stand forth for this, we should ponder this, fearful of the coming judgement for this. We should approach the Holy Sacrifice with great decorum, with proper piety, so as to merit us more of God's benevolence, to cleanse one's soul and to receive eternal blessings, of which may we all be worthy by the grace and love for mankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, to with Whom the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, and worship now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*The Orthodox Vision
The Diocese of the West
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