Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . .
Mt 28:19

Allez, faites de toutes les nations des disciples . . . .
Mt 28:19

CANADIAN ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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Mitred Archpriest Reposes in the Lord

On 14 November 1997, in Rawdon, Quebec, Mitred Archpriest Oleg Boldireff fell asleep in the Lord after a lengthy struggle with cancer. In his last moments and upon his repose he received every detail of loving Christian attention: the service of anointing with seven gospels, communion, prayers at the house, and anointing of the body by brother priests.

Mitred Archpriest Oleg Boldireff

1911-1997

Memory Eternal

The funeral services for Fr Oleg were very beautiful and memorable. As he had wished, he was robed in his blue vestments and wore his purple kamilavka with the Trisagion prayer strip laid across it. The Jerusalem Orthodox shroud was at the lower end of the casket. At Rawdon, his mitre and jewelled cross were on a little table beside the casket, and at Sts Peter and Paul in Montreal the mitre was placed in the casket by his shoulder. The Russian flag was draped over the coffin, as was the regimental standard. A Cossack lowered a flag during the singing of "Memory Eternal." Concelebrating clergy

continued, next page . . .

Archdiocesan Assembly Plans Unfolding

The theme of Orthodox Christian parish and family life will be a major focus of the 1998 Archdiocese of Canada Assembly, to be held at St Andrew's College in Winnipeg July 7-10.

Matushka Dianne Kennaugh, the Assembly Planning Committee chairperson, has confirmed that Fr Paul Jannakos, an engaging and inspiring priest and father from Michigan (OCA Bulgarian diocese), will give a two-segment presentation on "Raising Our Families as Orthodox Christians." It is expected that these talks will generate plenty of questions and discussion among delegates and observers.

Fr John Mancantelli and his wife Preotessa Clara (OCA Romanian diocese) will offer workshops on continuing adult education in our faith, as well as on effective children's church school planning. In addition, there will be workshops on parish choir singing, parish archives, and management of parish finances. These workshops will be facilitated by various highly skilled laypersons of the Canadian Archdiocese.

Matushka Dianne reports that this diocesan assembly is being structured to emphasize the liturgical bonds of our diocesan family—there will be a Divine Liturgy served each morning and vespers or moleben each evening—as well as to allow for leisurely diocesan family fellowship, with a barbecue and social evening on the first day and a river cruise and banquet on the third evening.

The usual diocesan business meetings must occur, but these will be well-spaced among the various workshops, liturgical services, and fellowship hours. A two-day clergy synaxis will precede the Assembly, and there are plans in the works for a youth conference to run concurrently with the diocesan meeting.

Occurring a year earlier than originally planned because of a change in year for the next OCA sobor

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Fr Oleg Boldireff, *continued from p.1:*

were Archpriest Alexander Janowski, Archimandrite Kyrill (Bulashevich), Archpriest Nicholas Boldireff, Igumen Irénée (Rochon) Hieromonk Marc (Pierre), Priest Nicholas Nicholaev, and Hieromonk Cyrille (Bradette). Archpriest John Tkachuk was also present.

Father Oleg's detailed biography was published in the *Messenger* in Autumn 1995, but a few highpoints of his extraordinary life should be mentioned here again. Born in Russia in 1911, he was at a very young age separated from his parents and his homeland because of the vicissitudes of war and revolution. He was educated in Egypt, Turkey, Bulgaria, Paris (St Sergius Institute), and England (St Andrew's, Canterbury). Having married Natalia Vsevolodovna Maliantovitch in 1935 in Paris, he was soon thereafter, in the same year, ordained to the diaconate and then to the priesthood by Metropolitan EVLOGY. For the next few years his life involved parish work, mobilisation into the regular French army, and capture by the Germans and imprisonment for a time in a POW camp. After the war he travelled all over France visiting labour camps and prisons in order to serve the spiritual needs of the Russian people held in them.

Fr Oleg and his family immigrated to Canada in 1948, at which point he was assigned to Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral, Montreal. He served there from 1948 to 1963, during which time he was also dean of Quebec and Ontario and instrumental in opening parishes in Quebec City, Val d'Or, Ottawa and Rawdon. From 1963 to 1970 he served as rector of Holy Resurrection in Vancouver. Following a few years of service in the USA in the early seventies, he was appointed rector of St Nicholas Church, Ottawa in 1974. His service to this parish, which he had helped to found many years before, continued until his retirement at the age of 76 in 1987.

Always and everywhere, Fr Oleg was a priest with a pastoral heart, as well as a loving husband and father. He is survived by his matushka, Natalia, five married sons, sixteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. May his memory be eternal!

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Assembly plans, *continued from p.1:*

(1999), the 1998 Canadian Archdiocesan Assembly promises to be a stimulating and enriching one. It is not too early for parish councils to begin thinking about choosing their delegates.The Planning Committee will be mailing out registration information packets to every parish during Great Lent.

Bishop Seraphim's Visitation Schedule January – June 1998

21 Jan – 5 Feb	Europe
6 Feb	Toronto: Canadian bishops' meeting
13 – 16 Feb	Windsor ON: St John the Divine
20 – 23 Feb	Toronto: Archdiocesan Council
13 – 20 Mar	New York: SVS & Holy Synod
21 – 22 Mar	Toronto: Christ the Saviour
25 Mar	Ottawa: Annunciation/St Nicholas
31 Mar – 2 Apr	Washington: SCOBA / RC dialogue
20 Apr	Montreal: Sts Peter & Paul
20 – 22 Apr	Fitch Bay QC: Transfiguration skete
29 Apr – 11 May	Saskatchewan deanery
17 May	Montreal: St-Benoît de Nursie
20 May	St Seraphim skete
25 May – 1 Jun	Ottawa / Toronto / Montreal: visit of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
6 Jun	Fair Haven: diocesan picnic
7 Jun	Ottawa: Holy Trinity
9 – 11 Jun	St Tikhon's (PA): clergy meeting
25 – 27 Jun	Fitch Bay QC: Transfiguration skete

Pastoral Notes

Effective 14 November 1997, **Priest Sviatoslav Dubanenko** is released from his attachment at Holy Resurrection Church, Vancouver BC.

Effective 1 January 1998, **Priest James Griggs** is appointed Rector of St Gregory of Nyssa Mission in Kingston ON.

Effective 1 January 1998, the mission of St Stephen the First Martyr in Roblin MB is closed.

The Wonder Continues

On the evening of 2 December 1997 the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, launched its new certificate program of Orthodox Theology at its Montreal campus in Longueil with a brief presentation of some of the professors who will teach, and a brief outline of what will be taught. At this campus, on the south shore of the St Lawrence, near the Jacques-Cartier bridge, the classes will be offered in French, although work may be done in English. It is understood that as the courses develop, there may be possible some extension study as well.

Practical organisation of the program has fallen primarily to Dr John Hadjinicolaou, and involves many persons with higher education in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto area as teachers. Interest in this program has been sufficient to begin with the offering of three courses in January 1998: Histoire de l'Église I, taught by Fr Cézar Vasiliu (OCA Romanian Episcopate); L'art de l'icône, taught by Fr Stéphane Bigham (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Carpatho-Russian Diocese); and Introduction à la theologie orthodoxe, taught by Deacon Lambros Kamperidis (OCA Archdiocese of Canada).

Why is it a wonder? Because the Lord has arranged it so that the Faculty of Theology, Ethics and Philosophy of the University of Sherbrooke would be able to fulfil the heart's desire of Professors Jean-Paul Desclos and Andrius Valevicius to offer such a program within the regular program and budget of the Faculty; and also because we are able to have a pan-Orthodox team of professors and support staff to present it. It is a golden opportunity to offer teaching of and about the Orthodox Faith at a higher level for all who are interested, and to serve as a balance to other kinds of teachings so readily available. It is an opportunity to add the Orthodox presence to academic debate in Quebec, and from there, perhaps to many other places.

A few historical notes :

We once had an Orthodox pastoral training program in our own diocese in Canada. The Pastoral School at Sifton, Manitoba was established by Archbishop ARSENY in 1928. It remained open, together with the Holy Ascension Monastery, for many years. In the course of its life, it remains the longest-lived attempt in our Archdiocese of educating pastors. Later on, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church opened St Andrew's College in Winnipeg, which serves to this day. And in 1998 an academy for the training of clergy will open in Toronto, Ontario under the Greek Metropolitanate of Toronto.

Fr Evan Lowig reminds us of the following graduates of the Sifton Pastoral School, who served the Orthodox Church as priests:

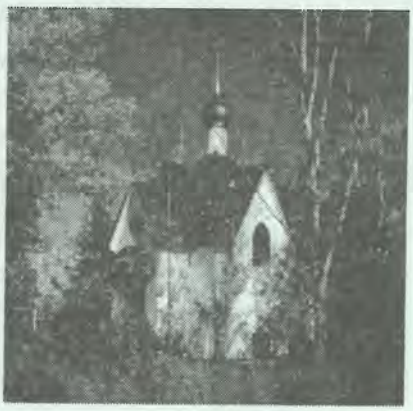
John Diachina	Efimy Moseychuk
Leonid Diachina	Eugene Olendy
John Kowalchuk	John Wasel

Orthodox Witness Renewed in Abitibi QC

Even in construction, this chapel has stirred local interest. The photograph shows the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene that Hieromonk Georges (Leroy) is in the process of building in Amos, in the north-west of the province of Quebec. The exterior of the chapel, as seen in the photograph, is entirely finished, but the inside still remains to be done, as of October 1997.

The photograph shows the structure from the south-west where the main entrance can be seen with the round window above it, as well as one of the big windows that light the nave. The lot on which the chapel is built is situated at the edge of the lake.

The surface area occupied by the building is not large, but it is rather high. Fr Georges wanted the chapel to have a vertical dimension that would remind one of the rising of prayer. The building is original, in that it is not a copy of any other, but its structure is entirely traditional. Except for the foundation, everything has been built by his own hands. Materials have been acquired at the best available prices, and this has helped to maintain the cost of the building at a very reasonable level. For those who like numbers: the cupola is covered by 623 copper scales, all hand cut, and 250 gold leaves were needed to cover the cross.



La Chapelle Sainte Marie-Madeleine

La chapelle qui apparaît sur la photo est la Chapelle Sainte Marie-Madeleine que le Hiéromoine Georges (Leroy) est en train de construire à Amos, en Abitibi,

continued, next page . . .

Quebec. L'exterieur de la chapelle, comme le montre la photo, est entièrement terminé, l'intérieur cependant reste encore à faire.

La photo montre le bâtiment du côté sud-ouest où on entrevoit la porte. On y voit bien l'une des grandes fenêtres ogivales qui éclairent la nef, ainsi que la fenêtre ronde au dessus de l'entrée. Le terraine sur lequel la chapelle est bâtie se trouve au bord d'un lac.

La surface occupée par le bâtiment n'est pas grande, mais sa structure est assez haute. Le pere Georges à tenu a ce que la chapelle ait un élan vertical qui rappelle l'élévation de la prière. Ce bâtiment est original car ce n'est pas la copie d'un modèle, mais sa structure est entièrement traditionnelle. A part les fondations, tout a été fait de ses propres mains. Les matériaux on été acquis aux meilleures conditions posssibles, ce qui a maintenu le coût de ce bâtiment à un niveau très raisonnable. Si on aime les chiffres, on peut noter que le bulbe est couvert de 623 écailles de cuivre, toutes taillées a la main, et qu'il a fallu 250 feuilles d'or pour dorer la croix.

My Pilgrimage to Russia

1 – 15 October 1997

His Grace MARK, Bishop of Kashira and Patriarchal Vicar and Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in Canada, had been suggesting for many months that we go together to Russia, and that we treat the visit as a pilgrimage. While I wanted to go, I had no idea how it would be financially possible. And there is always my calendar—this year more overcrowded than ever. I was so sure that there were too many obstacles, that I seriously but foolishly entertained another request. Then at the last minute everything fell into place and it was clearly evident that it was God's will that I go. So, leaving some people disappointed, and with a few typical eleventh-hour obstacles, I left with Bishop Mark for Moscow.

It was a blessing upon arrival to be greeted by Matushka Evdokia Hubiak, wife of Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, Rector of our OCA's Representation Church of St Catherine in Moscow, and to meet Father Igor, who is expected to come to Canada to serve the Patriarchal parishes when Father Alexander returns home. I was taken to the Danilovski Hotel, beside the Danilovski Monastery, and began to rest—Bishop Mark having very thoughtfully not organised much at the beginning specifically to allow for stillness, silence and prayer.

It had been quite a revelation, the drive into Moscow. This was my first visit to the city, but in 1980, when I lived in Finland at New Valamo, I had been given a weekend in St Petersburg, and so had tasted Russian society and church life then. What a contrast now: so many cars, so many newly painted and renovated buildings, and in so many pastel colours. I had heard of the greyness of the last decades, in contrast to the traditional colourful appearance of the more distant past. Amazing too were all the billboards, what was advertised for sale, and the multitude of small shops.

Already I could sense the different atmosphere. Before there had been a heavy weight of caution, even fear, not only on relationships, but in all of life. Now, even at the passport control, there was no longer any sense of that, even if people do speak of the high cost of living and the high crime rate. The weather for the two weeks of my visit would be cool, sometimes clear, most often a bit rainy. But on all important occasions, whenever there was an outdoor procession, it would be dry.

It was very good to retire and wake on the first day to the ringing of the monastery's bells, and spend many hours quietly. In the afternoon Father Hubiak took me first to Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, the chargé for Protocol in the Patriarchate's External Affairs Department. Some details of the coming week were clarified, and then I was introduced to our Representation Church on Bolshoye Ordinke. We have a very nice temple in St Catherine's, but the structure needs much repair yet, and the art restorers still hold two-thirds of the building for their studios. They should have left long ago, but new facilities are slow in being completed, and so they remain. This is a common story for parish churches in Moscow and elsewhere: having the right to a building is yet far from actually having it.

After a brief visit to the Patriarchal Offices on Clean Street, we returned to St Catherine's, and Father Christopher, one of the assistant priests, walked me to the Tretiakov Gallery and to the Icon Section therein. It was wonderful to come to the room where the Vladimir Icon of the Theotokos hangs, to sense the holy atmosphere, to see the many people whispering together an Akathist, and to be allowed to venerate the Icon by at least kissing the case—at the direction and permission of the on-duty supervisor. Here, and especially in the rooms where the icons of St Andrei Rubylov and others hang, there was definitely a prayerful atmosphere among the many visitors.

I was also given a brief walking tour of the nearby area, on the south of the Moscow River. In the course of this excursion, I venerated several well-known wonder-working icons, among them the Theotokos Joy of All Who Sorrow. As I have before witnessed in Ukraine, so also I saw here that the rebuilding of churches and communities presses on, with a strong sense of commitment among those who are believers, and a great deal of

searching among those who are not. On my return to St Catherine's, I met with Dr Alexander Dvorkin, a former classmate from St Vladimir's in New York, who now teaches in Moscow.

The next day Feodor Konin, a translator for the Patriarchate's External Affairs, escorted me to the Donskoi Monastery, which has now twenty monks. In the large summer church there, I venerated the Holy Relics of Patriarch St Tikhon of Moscow, the former Archbishop of North America, who was responsible for incorporating our diocese in 1903, and who consecrated many of our temples in Canada around 1905.

Then we visited the new Christ the Saviour Cathedral which is amazingly and rapidly replacing what had been razed by Stalin. The already completed exterior, with its white walls and gold-coloured cupolas, once again dominates the architecture of central Moscow. The basement church, which is finished except for some decorative carving of the walls of marble from Bethlehem, is a new addition to the temple structure (no basement before), and there is even an underground parking garage below it, as well as various meeting rooms. This basement church with its three altars is already functioning fully on weekends, is very beautiful, and accommodates several thousand people. On weekdays, faithful come to pray and venerate icons in its entrance hall.

The interior of the main church is far along in its construction (they seem to work night and day on these temples), and I understand that its walls will be covered with Siberian marble. People seem to have confidence in the strength of the new structure, and all are amazed at how swiftly it has gone up (so far just over two years, compared to the forty years of the first building). It will be the third largest European church building, and it is expected that if both the upper and lower churches are used on a great occasion, about 23,000 people can be accommodated. A figure like that can scarcely be comprehended in Canada, but it is quite possible to have such congregations in Russia. I was taken by elevator to the top of the temple, and walked around the perimeter. The bells in each corner were truly impressive, one of them the largest cast in this century in Europe. Also impressive was the view of Moscow from this vantage, and the variety of pastel colours very warming to see on a cool, windy day.

After this experience of central Moscow, I visited the edge of it, Poklonnaya Gora, where there is a war memorial containing a large collection of World War II armaments, along with a small but beautiful memorial church which holds regular services. The area also contained a memorial mosque, since many Muslims fought alongside the Orthodox in the armed forces. On the edge of this large territory, closer to the city's dwellings, a small memorial Cross has been erected by the clergy.

The next day—a quiet, restful Saturday—I went with Fr Hubiak to the 300-year old Holy Trinity Church, also in Poklonnaya Gora. It is one of the very few churches which survived the Soviet era without ever being closed. (And this on a main road!) In the evening I served at Vigil at St Catherine's Church with Father Daniel, and his assistants Fathers Christopher and Hilarion, and Deacon Michael. It was a beautiful service, and the small choir very good. Afterward I again spoke with Sasha Dvorkin, and also Sergei Chapnin, whom I had previously met at St John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, and who is helping publish books, newsletters, and an electronic news service.

Commemorations of St Innocent in Moscow and Zagorsk

The following day, Sunday, was the main commemoration of the glorification of St Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, Apostle to America. In the historic Ouspenski Sobor in the Kremlin, I concelebrated with His Holiness Patriarch ALEKSY II and sixteen other bishops, including our Bishop Mark, and many priests and deacons. The congregation was only a few hundred, since the state limits attendance in this museum-church. Afterward in the Patriarch's official residence tea was served. The Patriarch rightly made humorous references about this meal because the tables were groaning. Very soon afterwards everyone departed for St Philip's Church, the grounds of which contain the new Siberian Representation Church, a small hospice for Siberian travellers, and offices, all of which were to be blessed by the Patriarch.

After the blessing service there were speeches by both the Patriarch and the mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, who had found funds to aid the construction. The choir for this occasion included many young soldiers, some of whom had relatives in Canada. On this occasion also it was a delight to surprise Fr Oleg Kirilow, of our diocese but serving in Moscow, who had not yet heard of my arrival. Then after another tea, it was time to go to Sergeiev Posad and the Trinity-Sergius Lavra for Vigil, where a special surprise awaited me: participating were Bishops SERGEI and FEODOR and Archbishop ONUFRI from Ukraine, whom I know from my pilgrimage there. It was a lovely, warm reunion.

At Trinity-St Sergius Lavra the next day, the 200th anniversary celebration of St Innocent was held. It was in this monastery in Zagorsk that the saint spent much time, and where now his relics rest. After venerating them, as well as those of St Sergius, I prepared to serve again with Patriarch Aleksy, twenty other bishops, and many

continued, next page . . .

priests and deacons. Several thousand people were in attendance at this liturgy, as well as at the moleben and veneration of the Holy Relics which followed it.

The meal afterward included speeches about St Innocent, the current Patriarch, and the missionary activities of both. Then Bishop Mark took me for a walk through the grounds, and after a rest, we attended the Solemn Assembly of the Moscow Theological Academy in honour of St Innocent. There were many speeches about St Innocent and mission, and the need for missionary work in Russia and abroad today. The main presentation was by Bishop EVGENII, rector of the Academy. After that came a programme of singing, both liturgical hymns and spiritual songs related to St Innocent, led by the famous Archimandrite Matvei. There were also poetic recitations by school children.

At this point I should explain that the Theological Academy is only part of the many components of the Lavra community. There is also a seminary and a school. While I was at the Lavra the mayor of the town of Sergeiev Posad, in front of the Patriarch, stated that because of the academic atmosphere and resources of the Lavra, an Orthodox school will soon be opened in the town. This announcement was quite significant, because until recently these near neighbours of the Lavra had not been so friendly nor even interested in such an idea.

All was restful and quiet for me the next day at the Lavra until 3 p.m., when we gathered in various temples to serve Small Vespers and Akathist of St Sergius, whose autumn feast day was beginning. Bishop Mark and I served with about sixteen bishops in the Trapeznaya Church. Then from four till eight he and I served Vigil with many hierarchs in the Lavra's Ouspensky Sobor. I was one of three bishops anointing, and I did so for over half an hour.

At the Divine Liturgy the next day, the feast of the Lavra's patron St Sergius of Radonezh, I served in Ouspensky Sobor together with the Patriarch, Bishop Mark, and about twenty other hierarchs. There were bishops serving in three other churches within the compound at the same time, numbering about fifty-five bishops in all. I have never before experienced anything like this. In Ouspensky Sobor alone there were seven chalices, and giving communion took about a half hour. Concelebrating with the Patriarch were also representatives from the Constantinopolitan and Serbian Churches, and our OCA representative, Father Hubiak.

The clergy had all processed from the various churches to greet the Patriarch before the service, and we all again processed into the open square of the monastery grounds afterwards, with many thousands of people, to serve the festal moleben for St Sergius. The massed choir led by Archimandrite Matvei sang higher than I ever recall hearing a choir sing. After veneration of the patronal icon, there was a festal dinner in the Patriarchal residence, where I met Archbishop NIKOLAI who had once served in Canada. There were several interesting speeches, and for me many warm encounters with various Russian bishops, which resulted in invitations to visit Siberia: Omsk, Alma Ata, Vladivostok. Following numerous pleasant conversations, I returned to Moscow and the Danilovski Hotel, where I had supper with Father Oleg Kirilow.

For the commemoration of St Tikhon of Moscow the next day, Bishop Mark and Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin took me early to the Donskoi Monastery, once again to concelebrate with His Holiness. This celebration was a smaller one—only nine bishops—but again very beautiful. After the Liturgy we served a moleben for St Tikhon, and towards the end, after the Patriarch had venerated the Holy Relics, we bishops took up the relics and moved in procession from this summer church to the nearby winter church where the relics will remain until 25 March. Following the moleben we dined with the Patriarch in the Igumen's residence. Just as before, the speeches paid attention to missionary work, and the Patriarch's good example.

After I had returned to my hotel, Matushka Hubiak came for me. We drove to Red Square where I walked, saw St Basil's, and visited the newly-reconstructed Kazan Icon Sobor, which is of modest size but quite beautiful in its new iconography. I also venerated the Iviron Icon of the Theotokos in its newly-rebuilt shrine.

Optina Monastery

On the following morning I was driven south of Moscow, over 300 km and four hours by car, to Optina Monastery, in the province of Kaluga. The area seems a blend of Alberta and Ontario in ways hard to explain, although I have never seen so many birch trees in my life. The monastery is by a river, on arable soil but surrounded by forest. I arrived, and was greeted with ringing bells, and went as customary to the Entrance of the Theotokos Temple to venerate Sts Amvrosy, Moses and Nectary, and in the Kazan Temple many others. During lunch I talked with Archimandrite Benedict, Schemalgumen Elii and others, and afterwards I toured the monastery grounds and observed the immense reconstruction work in process.

After a brief rest I was escorted, walking, to the Skete, prayed in the Church of St John the Baptist, and was given time to sit and pray in the cell of St Amvrosy. By this time Bishop Mark had arrived, and we had supper with the Brotherhood in the trapeza. The currently recognised saints of Optina are Amvrosy, Lev, Makary,

Ilarion, Isaac, Anatoly, Joseph, Barsanoufy, Anatoly, Nectary, Nikon, and Isaac. There are also graves of three monks considered martyrs who were recently murdered at Pascha by apparent satanists. What I saw in Optina I have seen in other places as well: that despite the devastation by the godless, the Lord made blind the eyes of many authorities, or softened their hearts, and much that might have been destroyed remained as seed for the present resurrection of the Church in Russia, Ukraine, and elsewhere.

The next morning, Bishop Mark and I were in Church at 5:30 a.m. for Midnight Hour, hours, and Liturgy. The monastic singing was very quiet and peaceful, and there were many pilgrims attending, many of whom were also communicants. After Liturgy and a brief interval, we drove back to the Skete and again received the blessing of being and praying where the great Optina fathers had struggled in Christ, and we drank water from the holy well outside its walls.

Then we walked around the multitude of works associated with the life and reconstruction of the monastery which has many hectares of land to farm. There are huge piles of construction supplies, many buildings to house people and visitors, and numerous barns and workshops. Mostly from their own land the monks feed over 800 persons daily in winter, and over 1000 in summer. There are nineteen tonsured monks in the monastery brotherhood, twelve in the skete brotherhood, many novices and many, many others who live there, work there, and make a kind of village outside the walls. A special church is being built for them, too.

After this we were taken through the nearby town of Kozelsk and 20 km away to the Women's Monastery of Shamordino, a product of the life of the Optina Brotherhood, where now one hundred nuns live. Reconstruction of this community moves quickly. They have renewed their work with the retired, and I have hope that they will in time renew their orphanage as well. Because it had been raining, on this day of tour I got an especially close experience of Russian mud. We returned to Optina in time for Bishop Mark and me to serve Vigil together, and after the Polyelei, I anointed—which took a very long time because there were so many faithful present.

The next day was Sunday, and Bishop Mark and I were escorted to church by Archimandrite Benedict for the 10 a.m. Liturgy. We were two bishops, ten priests and four deacons, serving quietly and without rushing, and afterward serving a moleben for St Amvrosy and venerating his Holy Relics. After the formal meal in the trapeza, it was time to leave, but we lingered—talking, taking photographs, longing to remain in this holy place. When we finally found our way to the main highway north, there was plenty of traffic, as there might be in Canada on a Sunday afternoon, so it took a long time to return. Bishop Mark and I then parted, as he was to leave the next day to his family in Ukraine, and I returned to the Danilovski Hotel.

Last Days in Moscow

The next day I first spent some time with Fr Hubiak. Then Irina Dvorkina came with Fr Arkady, and they took me to an orphanage which cares for twenty girls in small quarters (they do not have access to all their rightful facilities because a monied protestant missionary holds on to at least half). The residence was well-managed and very clean, and I could see by their behaviour that the girls were being well-formed. Their caregivers and teachers invited me to share lunch with them all, which I accepted, and I heard Pushkin's story about the golden fish being read to them—with questions about vocabulary. The girls were very sweet, sending me away with keepsakes to remember them—it was very touching.

Then Fr Arkady took me to the hospital operated by the Christ the Saviour Brotherhood and the Sisterhood of Sts Mary and Martha (founded by St Elizabeth). Having 1500 beds, it is the biggest hospital in Moscow and has a large church dedicated to St Dimitry on the second floor. The hospital teaches and trains nurses and cares for over 30,000 patients a year. I visited during lunch time and saw the nurses in their refectory eating and listening to spiritual reading. Near the hospital is a hostel for the sisterhood, where some live, and there is a semimonastic environment.

Next came a visit to the St Tikhon of Moscow Institute, also operated by the Christ the Saviour Brotherhood. They have about 1000 "resident" theological students, taught in various rented quarters, since they have no building for classes, and another 1000 studying by correspondence, and in small groups in far away cities. The Brotherhood is also keeping a catalogue of new martyrs, and have a Website: http://kuzl.pstbi.ccas.ru/kuzn/kuznetsy. After seeing the various icon workshops, the library (which needs our donations) and other facilities, I visited St Nicholas' Church nearby, and venerated the Icon of the Theotokos Quench my Sorrows. This is another temple that was never closed, by miracles and suffering. The choir there is now mostly of students of the Institute, and it was the eve of the Protection.

I spent some time at Vespers, and then Sergei Chapnin came and took me to several other nearby churches, which we found in various stages of the Vigil. Sergei and his mother drove me then to Kolominsk, on the Moscow River in the suburbs, the site of the former Tsars' summer residence from early times. In this place

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ROC Bishop Joins OCA Bishop In Blessing Temple

In a Canadian first, September 23 witnessed MARK, Bishop of Kashira, Canadian vicar of the Patriarch of Moscow, joining the Orthodox Church in America's SERAPHIM, Bishop of Ottawa, in blessing the newly-purchased temple of Calgary's St Peter the Aleut Mission. As a marked gesture of Orthodox unity, at the close of the service Bishop Seraphim, whose diocese covers all of Canada, blessed Alberta parishes not only to invite the Russian bishop to parish functions but also to apply to him for answers to pastoral questions in the Canadian hierarch's absence.

Assisting the bishops in the *thyranoixia* ("opening of the doors") were founding pastor Priest Peter Isaac, now serving in Pueblo, Colorado; current pastor Priest Larry Reinheimer; and other clergy, monastics, and laity of the Canadian Archdiocese, the OCA's Romanian Episcopate, and the Antiochian, Greek, Russian, Serbian, and UkrainianOrthodox jurisdictions.

The Calgary mission, dedicated to the native Alaskan teen martyred at San Francisco in 1815, began in 1990 as the city's only Orthodox community to conduct services entirely in English. Led by the newly-ordained Deacon Peter, the community of eight adults and eleven children initially conducted services in homes, with the Divine Liturgy celebrated whenever there was a visiting priest. In March 1991 the mission received a resident priest; but the pastor remained Deacon Peter, who was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in August 1991. Meanwhile, the mission moved from homes to the Lutheran Bethany Care Centre's chapel to the Catholic Pastoral Centre's chapel.

In April 1992 the continually-growing mission found an abandoned, vandalized church to use rent-free. After much cleaning and fixing of this property, the community gathered on May 10, 1992 for the first Divine Liturgy in their new home. This building, eventually purchased by the Antiochian Orthodox parish of Annunciation, remained the mission's home until August 1, 1997, when the parish—now numbering forty-two adults, six teens, and fourteen children—moved into its new property at 33 Avenue and 19 Street SW.

On September 24, the mission's patronal feast, the community gathered around the two hierarchs and other clergy for a 6 a.m. Divine Liturgy. Despite the groggily early hour, the faithful sang the liturgy vibrantly and the number of communicants required two chalices. Surveying the number of jurisdictions represented by participating clergy and laity centred around the Holy Table, one priest repressed a mile-wide grin only long enough to exult: "This is what being the Body of Christ is all about. This is our dream finally taking shape."—*Philip Hope, Calgary*

Clergy taking part in the blessing of the new temple of St Peter the Aleut in Calgary: l. to r., Father Philip Speranza, Father Michael Furik (ROC), Father Dennis Pihach, Bishop SERAPHIM, Father Larry Reinheimer, Father Evan Lowig, Bishop MARK (ROC), Father Michael Lupu (Romanian Episcopate, OCA), Father Dimitrios Rougas (Greek Orthodox Church), Father Kristo Rikic (Serbian Orthodox Church), Father Taras Krochuk (Ukrainian Orthodox Church), Sub-deacon Stavros Andrews, Father Stephen Keaschuk, and Father Peter Isaac.

Moose Jaw Archpriest's 30th Anniversary Celebrated

Thirty years ago, on the feast of the Tranfiguration, 19 August 1967 OS, Deacon Svetislav Balevich was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in his home church, Christ the Saviour, Toronto, by Archbishop SYLVESTER. This represented the culmination of the work of Fr John Diachina, rector of the sobor, in recognizing the commitment of his young parishioner whom he saw working and supporting his aging parents after they had been uprooted from their comfortable life in Eastern Europe, first by the Communists and then by the Nazis, and now spending their last years in Canada. Fr John's sensitivity and persistence made possible the way for his multi-lingual subdeacon to attend seminary and serve the Body of Christ as an ordained clergyman.

Within a few days of his ordination, Fr Svetislav and his bride of two months boarded the CN passenger train in Toronto, crossed the prairies they had never seen before, and arrived in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, where the warm, friendly atmosphere of the parish they were assigned to serve, Holy Trinity Church, was immediately evident. It was a warmth which continues to this very day. At Holy Trinity Fr Svetislav would be the only Slavic priest in a fifty-mile radius. He would also serve, concurrently, the Kayville church for twenty-eight years.

The Moose Jaw–Kayville parish circuit in fact encompassed the whole region of southern Saskatchewan almost to the US border. With God's hand upon him, he drove his decrepit Volkswagen camper to Maple Creek to bury the revered priest; braved blizzards to minister to the sick and conduct funerals in severe Saskatchewan winters (weddings and baptism were usually done in spring or summer); and sometimes he would have to turn back and postpone a scheduled liturgy because spring rains made the gravel roads muddy and impassable. Often it was necessary for him to bring into the house both his jugs of holy water and the battery of his car, even during the daytime, to keep them from freezing and cracking. He would also translate into English the letters and documents of all who asked.

Because Fr Svetislav is a humble man and will not allow anyone to fuss over him, in honour of his thirtieth anniversary of priesthood his wife and his parishioners surprised him with two dinner parties after liturgies in August 1997. The first occurred at the Balevich home on August 19, after the liturgy of the feast of Transfiguration. Fr Svetislav knew that Fr Nicholas Marioncu of Descent of the Holy Ghost Romanian Orthodox Church in Assinoboia also observes his anniversary of ordination—in 1997 his 48th—on the same day, and he had invited Fr Nicholas to concelebrate liturgy with him and eat with us afterwards.

Fr Svetislav did not know that thirty of the many who attended liturgy were to join us for dinner. After the blessing of the fruit baskets at the end of the liturgy, Fr Svetislav asked God's blessing and led the singing of Many Years for Fr Nicholas. Then Fr Rodion Luciuk brought greetings from the Dean and led the prayers for Fr Svetislav. The home-cooked dinner which followed included organically-grown vegetables and herbs which Fr Svetislav raised from the seedlings he starts in early spring and nurtures through to harvest; for God has used Fr Svetislav's hands not only to bring healing to people in the parish but also to raise abundant harvests each year, food which he freely shares with everyone around. That God blesses his efforts is evident in the respect he has earned as a gardener from his parishioners, everyone of whom has been gardening and farming for more years than their priest has lived.

Father Svetislav

Family members were unable to attend; our two sons, Nick and Igor, are working in distant locations in the US; relatives too live enormous distances away. These phoned and mailed greetings. But the family of God surrounded him in prayer and fellowship. In addition to Fr Marioncu, we were blessed with the presence of Fr John Mancatelli and Preotesa Clara of St George's Romanian Cathedral in Regina and Fr Rodion Luciuk and family of Holy Trinity, Moose Jaw, who live in Swift Current. Pastoral duties prevented several others from Saskatchewan and Manitoba from coming, but we were richly blessed to have faithful from our own congregation as well as from Regina and even one from British Columbia.

Often our activities seem to organise and flow easily, detail after detail. But for some unknown reason this anniversary celebration was extremely difficult to get started. Much prayer and consultation with intimates

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Father Svetislav Balevich, *continued from p.9:*

seemed only to crystallise the resistance. It was plodding forward in shaky faith, one step at a time, from the point of forming the ideas through getting information and invitations out, even through the meal preparation. Somewhere in the midst of the cooking, the resistance broke and God's love permeated everything. I have used those same recipes before and since that dinner and have never been able to achieve the excellence of the flavours of the foods as on that day. The impossible details of not knowing who would and would not come must have been sorted out in heaven because everyone who came fitted into the house, had plenty to eat, and expressed enjoyment of the celebration. There was even some zucchini soup left over to take to our dear church treasurer who is currently confined to her home. (The water-turned-to wine at the wedding in Cana must have been indescribably delicious; the loaves and fishes that fed the multitudes must have nourished their spirits as well as their bodies!) My planning ended as I left for liturgy. But God in His incomprehensible love and mercy placed on the hearts of Alexina, Vera, Denise and Harry to volunteer in the kitchen and cover all my shortcomings with their love and hard work in serving, doing dishes, and tending all details I did not even think of asking about. These were truly ministering angels clothed in flesh. Christina brought her camera and photographic talents and, a week later, provided us with many mementos of the occasion, enabling us to see and re-live the blessings.

The second surprise came on the following Sunday, August 24, which date coincided closely with our arrival in Moose Jaw thirty years ago. Requiring a reason for the Ladies Aid-sponsored pot luck dinner, we asked Fr Svetislav to announce, on the previous Sunday, a Founders' Day Dinner. When he made the announcement, everyone except Father knew the real reason. It became almost a game all of us were playing to keep the secret from him. And we succeeded! Concelebrating with him were Fr Rodion and Fr Bernard Funk from St Vincent's Antiochian Church in Saskatoon. At the end of the liturgy, Fr Svetislav led prayers for the founders and, only when Fr Rodion brought greetings and a citation from Bishop Seraphim, did Fr Svetislav admit that he had suspected that something was going on on Tuesday, but this celebration on Sunday was a complete surprise.

The hall dining room was filled to overflowing with present and former parishioners from the country, former Sunday school students, and their spouses and children. Seated at the head table with us were Parish Council members and Ladies Aid officers (at least those who were not on duty in the kitchen), past presidents of the Church Committee, and the Mayor's representative from Moose Jaw City Council. Many memories were recalled.

Reflecting on these tangible outpourings of God's measureless, unconditional, perfect love for Fr Svetislav and for all of us who believe in Him, I sincerely thank all who prayed, came, sent cards and notes, and gave gifts to him at this special time in our life.—*Matushka Eva Balevich*

Bishop's Russian Pilgrimage, *continued from p.7:*

are three beautiful temples. We first visited the Kazan Temple, where Matins had begun, and prayed awhile. Then we walked past the impressive Ascension Sobor, which was not open. Along the river and up a steep bank was St John the Baptist Church, which we approached. It was closed, but Sergei knocked and gained admittance for us. We saw how this temple, not long ago reopened, was beginning to be restored, although only in summer use, and we sang some proper festal hymns with the two women who were on care-taking duty. We then had tea and heard how the local people are descended from the servants of the Tsars, and how they are still attached spiritually to these temples and the territory around. The tea was made with water from a spring which had given water to generations of them, as well as to their employers. I was literally drinking in Russian history! A truly blessed and God-sent conclusion to this day.

The next day, my last in Russia, was the feast of the Protection of the Theotokos. I served at St Catherine's Church with Fathers Daniel, Oleg, Christopher and Ilarion, and with Deacon Seraphim. It was very pleasant, a "quiet" hierarchical liturgy, with a good attendance, and tea at its conclusion, with plenty of conversation. The rest of the day was spent in giving an interview, packing, and having supper with the Hubiaks. Very early in the morning, Father Oleg Kirilow came to collect me and my bags, to drive me to the airport, and to help me through the first stages of checking in for the trip home. It was good to see him again, little changed in appearance, but flourishing in his presbyteral activity.

I give thanks to God for all the blessings that were so obviously poured out on this pilgrimage, for all the unexpected assistance given, and for the love expressed by all the people. I also give thanks to God for all the people who made it possible for me to go, and helped me with personal contacts; and especially for Bishop Mark. While I do not expect to be able to go soon to Siberia, it seems that I ought to organise a return both to Russia and to Ukraine, and that I ought to take a group of people, such as wish to go, with me to each. I am now going to prepare to do this in 1999, and I am giving this notice in case anyone wants to go. I will be happy to hear about suggested dates and itineraries. Seraphim

Orthodox Women's Conference

Building the Household of God ("Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" Psalm 127:1) is the theme of the seventh annual conference sponsored by the Orthodox Christian Women of Montreal (OCW), to be held on the first Saturday of Great Lent.

Speakers for the conference are Joanne Abdallah and her husband Fr John Abdallah from Pittsburgh. Joanne is a social worker and a member of the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Institute. She is founder and co-facilitator of a support group for Orthodox clergy wives in the Pittsburgh area. Fr John is founder of the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Institute and dean of the Antiochian Clergy of Western Pennsylvania. Fr John and Joanne co-edit the Antiochian monthly publication *The Word.*

Date: Saturday, 7 March 1998
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Place: St Nicholas Antiochian Church
80 est, rue deCastelnau, Montreal
Metro: deCastelnau
Cost: $25 includes breakfast and lunch
Information: Masha Tkachuk at 514-481-5093; fax 514-481-2256; or email at jtkachuk@sprint.ca

Theological Institute Retreat

The 1998 Orthodox Theological Institute Retreat will be held April 9 – 11 (Western Easter weekend) in Chateauguay, Quebec. The speaker is yet to be announced.

The fee of $100 includes room and board. Driving directions will be provided for those who request them. Reservations must be made in advance, before April 3.

For information/reservations materials:
phone 514-481-5093; fax514-481-2256;
e-mail jtkachuk@sprint.ca ; or write to
4347 Old Orchard Ave, Montreal QC
H4A 3B5.

New CD Music from Surrey BC

The Octet of St Herman of Alaska Church of Surrey BC has produced a tape/CD of its own music. Under the direction of Andrea Folster, the Octet's musical offering is entitled *What Shall I Render* and consists of selections from the Divine Services of Liturgy, Matrimony and Matins, including a version of the Magnificat written by Mrs Folster and her co-director, Jennifer Hainsworth. This tape/CD was produced with the blessing of His Grace Bishop Seraphim. *What Shall I Render* is available from St Herman's by writing the church at 9642-139 Street, Surrey BC, V3T 5H3. The cost, which must be pre-paid, is $12 for tape and $15 for CD, plus 20% postage.

Diocesan Picnic

The 1998 annual diocesan picnic will be held on Saturday, June 6 from noon until 5 p.m. at the diocesan headquarters and bishop's residence, Fair Haven, in Johnstown, Ontario.

Food will be "pot-luck style" with coffee and tea provided. The gathering will conclude with Great Vespers about 4 p.m.

Everyone is welcome!

More Books in Mt Athos Series

Canadian publisher Alexander Press has just released five more volumes in the "Mount Athos Series":

Abba Isaac the Syrian: An Approach to His World

The Saint: Archetype of Orthodoxy

The Christian in a Changing World: Monasticism and the New Realities of Life

The Meaning of Typikon [on the subject of the ordering of monastic life]

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

The authors of these beautiful little books are Archimandrite Vasileios of Iveron Monastery and Prof Georgios Mantzaridis of the University of Thessaloniki. Translators are Elizabeth Theokritoff and Dr Constantine Kokenes.

For more information or to order: phone 1-888-257-5517; fax 514-738-4718; or e-mail at johnh@top.ca.

Memory Eternal

On 10 January 1998 Matushka Suzanne Scratch fell asleep in the Lord after more than a decade of valiant struggle with stroke, paralysis, and cancer. An article about the life of this greatly loved member of our Archdiocesan family will appear in the next issue of the *Messenger.*

Our Venerable Father, St Nil of Sora (May 7)

Our holy father Nil Sorsky was born in 1433 to a family of Moscow nobility. While still a youth he abandoned the prospect of a brilliant career with the local prince in order to join the monastery of St Cyril of White Lake. Unhappily he soon discovered that since the death of its founders, that monastery had declined, with monks following their own will instead of the tradition of the holy Fathers. Therefore for his own spiritual benefit he left the monastery and, with his friend and disciple St Innocent (19 March), began his search for the true sources of monastic life.

They visited monasteries in Constantinople and also stayed several years on Mt Athos in order to learn by experience the traditions of the Fathers and about the mode of hesychastic life [a life of stillness and asceticism] which flourished on the Holy Mountain. Nil learned Greek and could meditate deeply on the writings of the Fathers on the guarding of the mind and on the prayer of the heart.

By 1489 the two ascetics returned to the monastery at White Lake to introduce the skete way of life there. At that time in Russia only large monasteries or hermits dwelling alone could be found. The middle way of skete life, where monks live alone in separate cells but come together regularly for liturgical services, was originally the foundation of glorious monastic centres in Egypt, and it is prized by many Fathers as being the best way.

At first St Nil built a cell in the vicinity of the monastery; then he moved about 15 km farther, to a wild, deserted and unfriendly place where the river Sora creates a swamp and offers no attractions for eventual visitors. There he was able to pursue without distraction the hesychastic life of prayer and study of the scriptures—the Bible as well as the writings of the holy Fathers and the lives of the Saints.

He would say that having offered God all his ignorance and limitations, he would not do anything without having found a basis for it in the inspired writings that had become his life and his very breathing. To one monk he wrote,

> Whether you are alone in your cell, or in a monastery among your brothers, fix your attention on the holy scriptures and walk in the steps of the holy Fathers, for the holy scriptures tell us to do so. Or give yourself to obedience to someone who has shown himself to be truly spiritual in thought, speech and actions . . . . If you cannot find this guide, then give yourself in obedience directly to God through divine scriptures.

He built a wooden cell and a chapel dedicated to the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, but he refused to receive those who wanted to share his way of life, protesting that he was a sinful man, ignorant, and sick in body and mind. But some of these men persisted and were continually knocking at his door and not leaving him any peace. So, submitting himself to the will of God, he finally accepted them, although not as disciples. He considered them companions in asceticism and collaborators in the labours of God: "my lords and my brothers," he would call them.

He allowed each one to build a cell within hearing range of the others, all of them around the church, and for each one to struggle alone ascetically, according to his conscience. Twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday nights, they would all gather to serve All-night Vigil in the church, ending with the Divine Liturgy and followed by a communal meal in the early morning hours. These vigils consisted mainly of Psalm-recitation, sometimes interrupted by ascetic readings or by short spiritual conversations among the monks. Only a small part was given to singing, because the ancient Fathers of the desert considered singing hostile to compunction and thus reserved it to the churches in the world.

In the typikon which St Nil established for the skete, he prescribes the monks to live by the work of their hands, avoiding heavy agricultural work and accepting donations only when ill or in situations of extreme necessity, in order to preserve their freedom and their ascetic tranquillity (hesychia). They were forbidden to leave the skete, and no women or children were allowed to enter it. They were to live in the greatest simplicity, content with only the strictest necessities, as prescribed by St Basil. The chapel itself had to be poor, devoid of rich ornament and objects of precious metal. Each monk was to concentrate on fighting by day and by night, with fast and vigil, his passionate thoughts, putting his efforts especially into uninterrupted prayer of the mind in the heart.

Despite the rigorous reclusiveness of this community, their leader's reputation made its way to the great centres of Russia at that time, Moscow and Novgorod. In 1490 St Nil was called to the council meeting in Moscow in order to respond to the heresy of judaicism. Thanks to the influence of this man of God, the council refused to condemn the heretics to death, agreeing only to their anathematisation and exile, and stating that

the punishment of heretics must be left to God Who is powerful enough to correct them.

In 1503 St Nil was present at another council where he proposed that the right to possess large properties and even whole villages be taken away from the coenobitic monasteries. These possessions had transformed the large communities of monks into feudal powers and thereby implicated the monks in numerous worldly worries which had nothing to do with their monastic vocation. In fact, the excess of monastic properties at that time was the main reason for the decline of the spiritual life and the rise of the perverted idiorythmic mode of monastic living.

Many monks of the White Lake monastery and the Transvolga region agreed with St Nil's point of view, but St Joseph of Volokolamsk (9 September)—supported by the hierarchy—opposed it strongly, arguing that because of their properties, the monasteries were able to do charitable work and contribute to the establishment of a society founded on evangelical principles. This was the beginning of the long quarrel between the "non-possessors" and the "Josephites" which would cruelly divide the Russian Church and become the source of many evils during the following centuries.

As for St Nil himself, he refused to involve himself in ecclesiastical controversy. He would say that "a monk should never engage in argument with anyone; instead he should retreat." He returned to the life of ascetic stillness in the skete at Sora and passed his last years in prayer and in transcribing the manuscripts of the holy Fathers.

As his body was declining, weighed down with many years, he wrote his testament. In it he asked his companions in asceticism to leave his body without a sepulchre and not to accord him any honours:

> I, unworthy Nil, beg my superiors and brothers, those who are of the same spirit as I, to fulfil my last will:
>
> After my death, throw my body into the desert so the beasts and birds may devour it, for it has sinned so grievously against God that it is not worthy of a grave. And if they will not do this, then dig a hole here where we live and bury me without any ceremony. I have always tried very hard not to receive honour or praise in this monastery during my lifetime. May it be the same after my death.

He sent his disciple Innocent to found a coenobitic monastery [Komel] and ordered that the skete of Sora should remain poor and the monks continue to live each separately in his cell. Then he peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on 7 May 1508.

The victory of the partisans of the possessors prepared the way for the secularisation of the Russian Church in the 17th and 18th centuries. But, despite persecutions, the ascetical spirit of St Nil remained as a fire that smoulders with life, hidden under ashes, and his writings had considerable influence on preparing for the renaissance which the Church underwent in the 19th century, beginning with St Paissy Velitchkovsky (15 November) and the Optina startsy.

A Meaningful Collision: Reflections on the Rite Of the Churching of Women

There are times when the frenetic pace and underlying secular presuppositions of our modern age collide with the theology and liturgical traditions of the Church. This collision is well-illustrated by the questions which sometimes attend the Prayers for the Churching of Women following the forty days after childbirth.

It is expected that the new mother will not return to the church (or society) for forty days following childbirth. In the prayers which seal her return to the temple, the Church prays for her, asking for health and strength, the protection of "bright and shining angels" and for her recovery. It also prays that God will "purify her from bodily uncleanness."

It is sometimes argued by the children of our secular age that this Rite of Churching is antiquated, obsolete and has no place in the life of a modern Orthodox woman. It is further argued that the theology it expresses is demeaning to women. "All these references to a woman's 'uncleanness' in the prayers," they say; "there is nothing sinful about sex or childbirth, so why should childbirth make the mother unclean?" Consequently, some have argued for the Rite's elimination or at least for its drastic revision. At the very least, they continue, the period of waiting for forty days before the new mother's return to church should be eliminated.

What are we to say to these proposals? First of all, it must be admitted that some people, misunderstanding the whole theology of the Rite of Churching, do hold a superstitious and unOrthodox view of it. They suggest that a woman is unclean during the entire forty days following childbirth and that this is the reason that she may not enter the temple during this time. This is, I suggest,

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Rite of Churching, *continued from p.13:*

bad theology: it sees the Christian Faith as yet another of the world's great religions, a religion of this age with all the religious categories of this age. It is, therefore, a failure to understand the true eschatological nature of our salvation.

But it is no remedy to bad theology simply to eliminate the whole thing. There was bad eucharistic theology in the West in the 16th century, but jettisoning the Eucharist, as some Reformers did, was not the answer. Rather, bad theology is remedied by proper theology. We ask ourselves, then, what is the theology underlying this liturgical practice?

The Concept of Uncleanness

The concept of ceremonial, ritual uncleanness is found in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Leviticus 12-15) but also in all other ancient religions. It is a seemingly universal human intuition and insight that certain things make one unfit and unready for contact with the Divine power through sacrifice. Thus, if one had an issue of body fluid (either male semen, female menstrual blood or the blood accompanying childbirth or some other open flow, even from a minor accidental cut) one was not allowed to approach God through sacrifice. It was not a question of being considered "sinful" but simply of ceremonial disqualification for religious rites.

What was the reason for this? This insight and feeling was so deeply held by the ancients that no explanation was deemed necessary in the Old Testament. It seemed to involve the concept of integrity and entirety. Mary Douglas, in her book *Purity and Danger,* surmises that a body which was discharging was seen as temporarily in a state of lacking wholeness and it was this lack that disqualified one for approaching the Divine. It was not that one had done anything ethically wrong for which one needed to repent, but simply that one had not yet recovered the requisite bodily wholeness.*

Such a concept of disqualifying uncleanness runs counter to the whole tenor of modern secular thought. But prior to the rise of secularism at the (so-called) Enlightenment, it was universal to all human cultures, and merely to dismiss it because our culture presently excludes such concepts is not to refute it. On the contrary, it is contained in Divine Scripture, was God's authoritative prescription to His Old Testament people, and the Mother of God herself submitted to such laws. Indeed, the reply of the ancients to our age might be to ask us "What makes you think you can approach God's power when you lack bodily integrity?" We might answer that bodily integrity has nothing to do with our approach to God and that God cares only for the state of our soul. This is the thought of the "Enlightenment." But by what authority do we assert this? Especially when the Law (and all ancient religions) assert the contrary?

The fact would seem to be that such Old Testament concepts as uncleanness disqualifying one from religious rites no longer apply to the Christian, *not* because such concepts are wrong but because Christianity is not a religion of this age but rather our participation in the age to come. As Fr Alexander Schmemann says, "Christianity is, in a profound sense, the *end of all religion.*" (*For the Life of the World,* p. 19.) That is, human religion—with its concepts of clean/unclean, priestly/lay, holy ground/common ground, holy day/common day—has been transcended in Christ. Insofar as religion is of this age, these distinctions remain valid. But in Christ we partake of the realities of the age to come, where such concepts no longer apply. As Fr Alexander again says, "the categories of the 'pure' and the 'impure,' which are indeed central *before* Christ, are radically transformed by Christ's coming—transformed, not simply abolished." (*Of Water and the Spirit,* p. 132.) The modern secularist would reject these categories, with their precept of ceremonial uncleanness, because secularism does not rise to the truth of human religion. But we Christians are not bound by them because, in Christ, we *transcend* them.

What then of the references to bodily uncleanness in these prayers? In a revision of the churching rite, they might be omitted, because our "cleanness," our acceptability to God and our fitness to enter His Presence, comes from our baptismal incorporation into Christ. Since we are "in Christ," the categories of this age, though valid in this age, do not apply to us.

Where these prayers are used as they presently are written, they must be understood from this eschatological perspective: that the woman after childbirth is made "clean" and freed from the categories of this age through Christ. Formerly such transition from uncleanness to cleanness occurred through the passing of time and ceremonial washing. Now it occurs through our incorporation into Christ and our participating in His power which liberates from this age with all its religious categories.

It is an error to understand these prayers as sanctioning and using the categories of this age, so that the Christian woman through this rite passes from a state of uncleanness to cleanness. Formerly some in the Church

* The author does not mention at this point a detail included in the consideration of the forty days. An important element to remember, when considering the effect of these particular discharges, is that they imply a contact, an involvement with "the Holy" which would set one apart; and that the ceremonial washing in the Old Covenant enabled a return to regular community life. +S

have indeed thought this. Their view is reflected in the canonical letter of Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. 247 AD). This patriarch, when asked by a brother bishop, gave as his pastoral opinion that women should not receive Holy Communion while menstruating ("canon 2"). Here Dionysius would appear to be importing into the Faith the religious categories of this age and in this he has had many followers. But this was not a part of the true and apostolic Tradition.

That traditional truth is better reflected, I contend, by the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (or "Teaching of the Apostles"), a third century teaching. According to the *Didascalia,* women are said not to be made unclean by their bodily issues, because these do not make them devoid of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it says to the woman, "if the Holy Spirit is in you, why do you keep yourself from approaching the works of the Holy Spirit? [*i.e.,* the Holy Communion] . . . for you have received release that you should no more bind yourselves. And do not load yourselves again with that which our Lord and Saviour has lifted from you. And do not observe these things, nor think them uncleanness . . . ."

Here is the true and eschatological understanding of redemption in Christ. According to the world's categories, menstruating women and women after childbirth are indeed unclean, but baptismal union with Christ has released us from this age "that we should no more bind ourselves and load ourselves again with that which our Lord and Savious has lifted from us."

"The Fulfilling of the Forty Days"

After child-birth, it is customary for the new mother to wait forty days before returning to church for the Rite of Churching. This is not simply a survival of Judaism, as some have said, for if it were, the mother would wait forty days after the birth of a boy and eighty days after the birth of a girl (*cf.* Leviticus 12:2-5), whereas the mother waits forty days before returning after the birth of either. Some, as we have seen, view this period as a time when the mother is unclean and therefore secluded from the temple. We have seen too that this view is not adequate as an expression of our true Tradition. But does it mean that the period of seclusion should be abolished?

Many human cultures and religions prescribe a period of forty days' rest and seclusion for the mother following childbirth. Midwives tell us that this is the time required for internal healing and it is perhaps for this reason—the restoration and protection of the mother's health—that this custom was universally observed in many cultures. This custom runs counter to our modern tendency. Secular feeling sees the birth of a child as a simple biological event (albeit a joyful one) and wants the mother to "return to normal life" as quickly as possible. Hospitals send new mothers home within a few days and in certain circles a speedy return to full-time employment for the mother is deemed ideal.

Over against this is the ancient Orthodox wisdom which knows child-birth not simply as a biological event but as the participation of the woman in the very creatorhood of God. The woman's flesh, though fallen, has become the instrument of the Trinity through which another human being has been created. The new child has been made and given life—and this life is the life of the mother. As Fr Alexander says, "Not only do they need one another, not only is the life of each 'geared' to the life of the other, but they have the *same life.* . . ." (*Ibid.,* p. 143). Thus, while the child is new, the mother retreats from the world to create and enjoy a sacred space of safety, warmth and nurture for the child. She "drops out," not just of church, but of society with all its frenetic obligations and labours, going on a kind of spiritual retreat with her miraculous new bundle of life. Sometimes, owing to pressures of employment and other necessities, such an ideal time of retreat is not possible, and return to society and church may have to be hastened. Obviously, "economy" in the "fulfilling of the forty days" is required. But the unthinking and frantic pace of our society, with its secular disregard of a mother's needs, should not make us reject the ideal which the church still upholds.

Secular thought does not understand much of Orthodoxy because Orthodoxy is the fulfillment and embodiment of all human religious truth, which it then transcends, and secularism is estranged from all such truth. It is not to be wondered at, then, that it misunderstands and rejects such basic and primordial rites as are involved in the giving birth to new life. Our reaction, in turn, to such rites is the measure and test of how much we have succumbed to this modern secular spirit.

The challenge before us is to be true to our apostolic Tradition and to tread the "royal way" between two extremes. We must avoid the secularist view which would reject the Rite of Churching as something outdated and demeaning. But in rejecting such secularism, we must not fall into the opposite error of religious sectarianism, seeing our Orthodox Faith according to the categories of this age [and thus just one of the world's many religions], with its dichotomies of clean/unclean. The truth lies between these two extremes. We are called to use the Church's rites with the Church's true and Traditional apostolic understanding. The Rite of Churching after forty days' seclusion is not to be used as a kind of cleansing ritual. Rather, after a holy retreat from this world with her newborn child, the mother is liturgically "welcomed home," and with celebration reintegrated into the community of faith.—*Fr Lawrence Farley*

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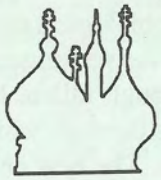

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