

*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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From the Bishop's Desk:

Difficulties in Church life

There are a great many places in the world in which Orthodox believers are having a particularly difficult time now. There is the intensification of pressure against the Orthodox in Egypt, with the many deaths. The picture is even worse in Sudan. In Ethiopia and Eritrea there is difficulty not only with recovery from a hostile communist government, but also from the country's division into two, as they each work towards stabilisation. In all three of these countries there is also drought and remaining devastation after war. In greater Palestine, besides the difficulties made for Christians in general, the Orthodox Palestinians have to suffer from being kept down by their own Orthodox brethren as a second-class people. Here there are fears that almost all the Orthodox could leave.

In Turkey the Orthodox are reduced to a minuscule remnant, and in the east the Syrians, who are the last Aramaic speakers, are being eradicated. In Greece, there is difficulty in adjusting to the new environment of the European Union, with its many influences on traditional life. In Albania, where the Church was only recently restored, there remains pressure against it in some quarters, and it has had to face additional refugees from Kosovo. In Serbia, coping with caring for myriad refugees and the very recent loss of its historic monasteries and churches in Kosovo and Metohija and the rebuilding of Church life and family life has been exacerbated by political tensions.

In every one of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Balkans, which were once part of the greater Soviet Union, there is the great challenge not only of rebuilding the multitude of churches that had been eradicated, but also of rebuilding the foundations of Church life itself. Hospitals, schools, chaplaincies, hospices, monasteries, ecclesiastical goods factories, publishers—everything has to be rebuilt, and the people must be re-educated. And there are few resources to speak of. Whatever can be borrowed from us abroad has to be translated, reworked and reprinted in order to address the

local peoples. All this is not to speak of the slow process of renewing and replacing the whole staff of each Church's administration and hierarchy.

Then there is the Church in China, being rebuilt by two apparently competing Orthodox Churches. And in other far-eastern countries where Orthodox missions were recently planted, reactions by certain parties against other Christians will involve them also. And here in North America and Western Europe, we have made little if any progress in the face of secularism and materialism, and we perpetuate the scandal of divided administrations.

It has been interesting to see how in recent times there has been so frequently in the media hostile reporting or interpretation of Orthodox events, or phantasy-like politicisation of various events and reactions. In a recent Christmas diatribe against Russia in an Ottawa paper, a journalist described the Orthodox Church as "theology-free" and responsible for walling off Rus' from the west from the earliest days.

Don't get me wrong. I don't have a case of paranoia or persecution-complex, and I don't see everything as black, and I am not encouraging self-pity.

I do see, however, that we are being called to account for our faith in Christ, and we are being called to account for our personal and collective past and present sins. I do see that we have a need greater than ever to call upon and depend upon our Saviour Jesus Christ at all times and all places. I do see that we have a great need to repent, and live much more seriously according to the Gospel. I do see that where we have made mistakes, or fallen short, it is necessary that we all, both as persons and as a whole body, admit our mistakes, swallow our pride, and return to being the exemplars of love and service that Christ calls us to be. I do see that it is necessary for us to renew our love for Christ, and to face all of these obstacles and hostilities with love, forgiveness, prayer, forbearance. I do see that we must depend on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to enable us to give a good accounting for the hope that is within us, and to enable us to give up everything that may separate us from being identified with Christ, the Truth for which the whole world

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is searching. We bear this Truth, and we are being tested as to our fidelity and sincerity, to our love and our commitment. How will we measure up? Will the testers be able to see Christ in us and even be able then to believe? Can we actually forgive our enemies and bless our persecutors?

ABCs of Christian living

As I pass around the Archdiocese on my regular pastoral rounds, I am very much encouraged by the steady growth that is evident in so many areas. By God's grace and mercy we are making progress in our recovery and stabilisation of real Church life. And I do want to give God glory and thanks for the increase not only in the number of converts received into the Church, but also of those returning to active life after some or many years of being elsewhere.

And yet, as I also experience the life of the Church in other countries, I am reminded of how much work there is still to be done, and particularly the work in deepening in the hearts of our believers love for Jesus Christ, and focussed commitment to Him. I have not had the blessing to return to Portugal this year as invited, but I have seen how Church life there has progressed. Some may recall the report of my previous visit some years ago. This Church, now a little over thirty years from its foundation, and a part of the Polish Orthodox Church, has five dioceses in Portugal and another in Brasil; it has almost ten monasteries; and it numbers six bishops, over 70,000 faithful, and has just consecrated its cathedral near Lisbon, now the largest church in western and central Europe. And it is about to build a large monastic lavra. I have been able to see the life of the Church in Finland, Ukraine and Russia, and to report on it, and to describe the development of Church life there, and especially the lightning-quick rebuilding of the latter two.

How is all this accomplished? It is faithful people working actively together with the Lord with love and commitment. But primarily it is the Lord who works all of this, and His people cooperate as much as possible.

We have a lot of intellectual capability in North America, and here in Canada. We are not short on committed persons. But we seem not to be able to offer to the Lord the kind of fruits that our brothers and sisters elsewhere are managing in our days. What is lacking in us? What needs correcting?

To my mind the major element in need of correction is our arrangement of priorities and sense of direction. Many of us seem to be propelled in these days by one, the other, or both of the following: intellectual pride, and fear. On the one hand, forgetting that our relationship of love

of/in/with God is the first priority, we have a tendency to spend too much time and energy on the intellectual aspect of theology. On the other hand, we may be afraid of what might happen, who may attack us. Either we become triumphalistic and vainglorious about Orthodoxy or, in fear, we become legalistic and try to protect Orthodoxy from any possible distortion with rules. Perhaps we are proud of our lively liturgical life; but fearful of what has happened elsewhere, we kill it by becoming obsessed with the fine print of a typicon. There are many variants to which we are vulnerable. And they all lead us away from, instead of into the Kingdom.

We can become so concerned by the House of the Lord that we forget the Lord of the House. We can beautifully serve the Lord liturgically, but desperately neglect Him in our neighbour. We can richly adorn the Temple of the Lord, but neglect altogether to give alms and to care for Him in the poor and needy. Anything in the Christian life which is tilted much to one side or another is out of balance and therefore in need of correction. Fear is not from the Lord, and pride certainly is not. God is love. As for the beauty and perfection of the Church, any danger to the Church in our time is hardly likely worse than at any other time in the past two millennia. The Church is the Lord's, and He has always kept the gates of Hades away, and He always will. It is for us not to protect, it is for Him. It is not for us to save, it is for Him. It is for us to love, to be obedient, to serve, and to live in the Way. May our Saviour Jesus Christ enable us always to look to Him, and to be found in Him. *Seraphim*

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*Dedicated to the memory of St Tikhon,
Patriarch of Moscow (+1925),
Archbishop Arseny (Chahovtsov),
and other missionary labourers
of the Orthodox Church in America.*

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Pastoral Notes

On 1 Jun 1999 the establishment of the **monastic chapel/hermitage of Ste-Marie Madeleine** in Amos QC was blessed.

Effective 1 Jul 1999, **Priestmonk David (Edwards)**, remaining attached to the Monastic Community and Chapel of St Silouan in Johnstown ON, is released from all responsibility at Holy Trinity Sobor in Winnipeg MB, upon his move to Edmonton AB.

On 1 Aug 1999 the **Mission of St Vladimir Prince of Kiev** was blessed for Halifax NS. Effective 15 Aug 1999 **Priest Vladimir Tobin** is received on loan from the Antiochian Archdiocese to serve the Mission of St Vladimir in Halifax NS.

On 25 September 1999 the newly-constructed **Hermitage of St Anthony the Great** near Westport ON was blessed.

Effective 1 Oct 1999 the hermitage established at Gibson's Landing BC, first named for St Silouan the Athonite, was re-named for the **Transfiguration of Christ**, with its chapel dedicated to the **Entrance of the Theotokos**. Effective 1 Oct 1999 **Igumen Gregory (Papazian)** is released from his attachment to the Chapel of St Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown ON, and assigned to the Chapel of the Entry of the Theotokos in the Hermitage of the Transfiguration, Gibson's Landing, BC.

Effective 1 Oct 1999 **Priest Vasyl Kolega**, on loan from the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and remaining attached to St Herman of Alaska's Church in Edmonton AB, is given the pastoral responsibility of Holy Trinity Church in Smoky Lake, Assumption Church in Shandro, St Michael's Church in Sochawa, Nativity of the Theotokos Church in Kysylew, St Elia's Church in Pakan, and Ascension Church in Wasel AB.

On 12 Nov 1999 the establishment of the **monastic chapel of St Sergius of Radonezh** in Halifax was blessed. It is a part of the Communauté Monastique de St-Séraphim de Sarov.

Effective 15 Nov 1999 **Priest Andrey Somow** is granted retirement from active presbyteral service. He remains attached to the Altar of Holy Resurrection Church in Vancouver BC.

Effective 15 Nov 1999 **Archpriest Michael Fourik** is assigned Acting Rector of Holy Resurrection Church in Vancouver BC, and installed by the Chancellor of the Archdiocese on 5 Dec.

Effective 15 Nov 1999 **Priest Philip Speranza** is assigned as second priest at the Mission of the Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut in Calgary AB.

On 26 Dec 1999 **Deacon Ronald Victor Poworoznik** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at St Herman of Alaska's Church, Edmonton AB. A student, he is attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St Silouan the Athonite in Johnstown ON.

Effective 1 Jan 2000 **Priest Leonid Misnik** is reinstated in active priesthood and attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St Silouan the Athonite in Johnstown ON.

St Vladimir's Institute in Saskatoon

22 – 26 May 2000

The theme of this year's Institute is *Orthodox Liturgical Worship*. Professor Paul Meyendorff will lecture on "Introduction to Liturgical Theology," and Father Paul Lazor on "Introduction to Liturgics." The cost for auditing the course will be \$300.

Please contact Fr Dan or Wendy Guenther for more information: Tel. 306-652-8772; or, 2705 Jarvis Dr., Saskatoon SK S7J 2V2; or, dwguenther@home.com

Bishop Seraphim's Visitation Schedule March – July 2000

27–30 Mar	New York: Holy Synod and St Vladimir's Seminary
2 Apr	Toronto: Christ the Saviour Sobor
	<i>remainder of Lent: no travel</i>
1 May	Montréal: Canadian Episcopal Concelebration
7–25 May	Saskatchewan Deanery; SVS Institute Saskatoon
9–12 May	Clergy Synaxis, Calgary AB
27–30 May	St Tikhon's Monastery, PA, Canonisation
3 Jun	Diocesan picnic, Fair Haven
9–11 Jun	Archdiocesan Council, Ottawa
24 Jun	Milton ON: Canadian Episcopal Concelebration
25 Jun	St Nicholas, Wostok-Bukovina AB: 100 th Anniversary
25 Jun – 7 Jul	Alberta Deanery
9 Jul	Winnipeg MB: Canadian Episcopal Concelebration
9–17 Jul	Manitoba Deanery
15 Jul	St Nicholas, Sandy Lake MB: 100 th anniversary

Archdiocesan Picnic

The annual Archdiocesan Picnic will be held this summer at Fair Haven, the diocesan chancery in Johnstown, Ontario on Saturday, June 3, beginning at noon. Food is pot-luck, so bring and share! The afternoon will close with Vespers in St Silouan's Chapel at 5:00 p.m.

Our father among the saints

Saint Innocent of Alaska

March 31 / April 13

How does one describe the rays of light that emanate from a strong candle, burning brightly and raised high? So it is to describe the life of St Innocent, Equal to the Apostles, Enlightener of North America; veteran Alaskan priest; Bishop of Kamchatka, the Kurile and Aleutian Islands, 1840-1849; Archbishop of the Kamchatka-Yakutsk diocese until 1867; and Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, 1868-1879. Still more difficult it is to grasp the virtues he acquired through ardent prayer and the constant evangelization of his own soul, the true factors underlying the strength of his Orthodox apostolic work on the North American continent and in his native Russia.

How does one begin to describe the courage and endurance to face mortal danger riding island-to-island over choppy Alaskan waters lodged in a tight Aleut *baidarka*? Or the stamina to travel 8,000 kilometres in archpastoral visits, not once but three times over, through all of Kamchatka by dog-team and *povozochka*—a small box in which one could sit, but not turn or move—and often to brave the elements in the wilds dug into a cave made of snow? Or the energy to learn not one foreign language but several, and six other dialects, to translate Scripture, and to compile lexicons and dictionaries in order to bring to the speakers of those languages the *blagoveschienie*, the blessed good news, of the love of God for all people? And in it all, to keep the abiding love required not only to preach to, but to live with, keep the dignity of, and learn from the Aleut, Tlingit, Koriak, Chukcha, Tunguz and other peoples of Alaska that he served for more than forty years. At the end, clothing his virtues in deep humility, he did not focus on a single one of his own endeavors, but on the Alaskan people dear to him, expressed in his heartfelt words, “I shall never forget them.”

Saint Innocent of Alaska is near enough to our day that an actual photograph of him exists, taken in 1879. Well might he, in sitting for the photograph, have marvelled at the modern processes of photography, so interested was he in mechanical invention. Yet clearly the photo in line and bearing depicts one “who has fought the good fight,” whose course of labours was done, in the words of the Apostle St Paul. “There is something apostle-like in that man,” Metropolitan Philaret had said prophetically when

he had first met the energetic Alaskan priest some forty years earlier.

Born in the rural Irkutsk region of northern Russia in 1797 to the family of a reader, Eusebius Popov, the young Ivan was bereaved of his father by age five. His uncle, Dmitri, adopted and taught him. The precocious young boy was reading the Epistle regularly in Church by eight, and by ten was a student at the Irkutsk Theological Seminary. Shortly after, his uncle took monastic vows; it was from “Father David” that Ivan drew his strong interest in mechanics and carpentry. While still a boy, he made a water-clock that amused his fellow-pupils with its face of writing paper, water dropping on tin to make the “ticks” and bell to sound the hours. The rector of the seminary surnamed him “Veniaminov,” after the Bishop of Irkutsk.

Life moved quietly with marriage at twenty, ordination as a priest, and two years spent at the Irkutsk parish of the Annunciation, where Father Ivan won the esteem and love of his parishioners with his kindly nature and humble attentiveness to their needs. After liturgy he was fond of gathering the children for spiritual instruction. This love of children stayed with him all of his life, whether of his own (the Veniaminovs had six) or others, and he could be found conversing, instructing and playing games outdoors with them.

In 1823, the Irkutsk Diocese was asked to send a priest to Unalaska, part of the Aleutian Islands lying between Kamchatka and America, in order to expand the work of the Alaskan church that had begun at Three Saints’ Bay in 1784, and with the Bolotov Mission (Monks Herman, Makarii, Juvenaly, and others) that by 1796 had catechised and baptised a large indigenous population. No one volunteered. It was only when an Unalaskan acquaintance, Ivan Kruikov, made mention of the devotion of the faraway Aleut people to prayer and to the Word of God that Father Ivan felt a strange burning in his heart to go. The blessing of the Bishop of Irkutsk, carefully given, confirmed his desire.

On May 7, 1823, he left Irkutsk with his family, including his wife, his elderly mother, a one year old child and his brother. With a stop to serve a *moleben* in his home village church, their Alaskan exodus began. It would last over a year, by barge and on horseback through marshes and high slopes, and finally by ship. As a priest he was to spend ten years among the Aleutians with Unalaska as his home base and five years among the Kolosha (or Tlingit) aborigines at Baranoff and surrounding islands. Not too far away and until 1837, the beloved “Apa” of the Aleut, St Herman, was laboring on Spruce Island.

Alaskan life began in an earthen hut, with the first task to build a church, which meant training islanders in the construction trades. Soon Father Ivan was mastering the local language, devising an alphabet, translating the Gospel (St Matthew) and frequently-used prayers and hymns that soon replaced shamanistic chants among the people. The illumination of the people meant practical, loving interaction: studying their customs and traditions, their world perspective and their dialects (later prepared and published as true scholarly works), the building of schools—even vaccinations—and preaching the Word of God at every opportunity. He also opened Alaska's first meteorological station.

In 1840, the Archpriest Ivan Veniaminov was back in Russia seeking assistance for the Alaskan missions when word came of the death of his wife. At that time a separate Diocese of Alaska was being formed. Despite his personal grief and concern for his children, he was advised to seek tonsure as a monk, which he did, and was named for St. Innocent the Wonderworker of Irkutsk. Proposed as an episcopal candidate, he was chosen and consecrated Bishop on December 15, 1840. On his way he again served a *moleben* in his home village church, and departed for Sitka.

Bishop Innocent's energetic work began immediately: a missionary team was sent to Nushagak in the Alaskan interior and a theological mission school was opened at Novo-Archangelsk (Sitka) with 23 students, also offering instruction in languages, medicine and Latin. In 1842, while caught in a terrible storm at sea, he called fervently on the prayers of St Herman, five years reposed, and it miraculously abated. In thanksgiving for this, he served a *panikhida* over the grave of the Blessed Elder. The Kvikhpak Mission on the Yukon River began. Arduous journeys to encourage, serve, and ordain clergy, and to open orphanages and his extensive writing all bore rich fruit; by 1850, the Alaskan Diocese had 36 parishes/missions and nearly 12,000 communicants. With his lively interest in his surroundings, he still found moments to record such scientific phenomena as the life of Alaskan sea otters.

The influence of the godly Alaskan pastor was far and wide. Bishop Innocent met Hieromonk Nikolai (Kasatkin), later known as St Nicholas, Enlightener of Japan, in 1860 on his way to serve in the Orient. Nikolai wisely heeded Bishop Innocent's urging to utilize the Japanese language for the good of the church. St John of Kronstadt was attracted by the Alaska missions when the Lord vouchsafed him a vision of the Kronstadt Cathedral. Bishop Innocent offered this useful exhortation to clergy:

Woe to him who is called and ordained to propagate the Word, and does not do so! When explaining the objects of faith it is important to speak circumspectly, clearly, distinctly, and in as few words as possible, or your sermon will have little success . . . You must convey to your listeners the essential message of Christ's teaching: that we repent, believe in Him and nourish a selfless and pure love for Him and all mankind . . . If you are to win your listener's hearts you must speak from your heart, for it is the strength of our heart's feeling that moves us to speak. So only one who is filled to overflowing with faith and love will be able to speak with a wisdom which his listeners' hearts will be unable to resist.

St Innocent's *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*, first published in 1833 in Aleut, is a succinct Orthodox statement of belief in the Holy Trinity, with astute commentary on human nature, on interior crosses, fasting and almsgiving as the wings of prayer, and seven useful counsels on guarding the faith. Reflective of his own life, he urged everyone to be industrious, to accustom oneself to work from childhood. Most practically, he added, "*Get going, somehow or other to the Kingdom of Heaven, and then you will gradually be getting nearer to it . . . just as when a person who is going somewhere takes a step forward, he gets nearer his destination.*"

When he left Alaska, it was not to retire, but to take up further work in northern Russia, requiring that he live in Siberia. He would touch the hearts of the Yakut people by serving the liturgy in their native language for the first time. New dangers awaited him there, too: during one of his journeys, while at the port of Ayan, he was nearly captured by the English during the Crimean War!

Finally in 1868, more than seventy years of age, somewhat infirm of body, but full of spiritual strength and zeal, he was selected to become the Metropolitan of Moscow. The holy hierarch Innokentii remained apostolic to the end. His last concern on March 31, 1879 was "Tell them that no eulogies be pronounced at my funeral . . . Let them rather preach a sermon; it may be instructive. And here is the text for it, '*By the Lord are the steps of a man rightly directed*'."

He was canonized in 1977.

Saint Innocent of Alaska, pray for us!



A newly ordained priest

Two weeks after celebrating the consecration of their temple, the faithful of St Herman of Alaska's parish in Edmonton witnessed the ordination, on December 26, of Deacon Ronald Victor Poworoznik to the Holy Priesthood. Presenting the new priest's vestments to Bishop Seraphim during the service were the seminarian's wife Brenda, and daughter, Michaelene.

Priest Ron is one of nine Canadians in the Orthodox Church in America who are presently studying in seminary. Fr Ron and Brenda have been actively responding to God's call in their lives and have been working to prepare themselves for full time service in the Church. Because complete seminary training is not readily available here in Canada, they are pursuing that goal by taking a route slightly different from the usual.

Fr Ron was baptized in his parent's home in Edmonton by Fr John Margitich, rector of St Barbara's Cathedral (Moscow Patriarchate), but lack of transportation and the language barrier discouraged regular participation of the family in parish life. But by their example, his mother Mary and his grandfather George helped shape and nurture the young boy's love for God and the Church. From childhood there was a sense that worshipping God was an essential part of life.

As a teen he began to attend church services more regularly, soon discovering St Herman's, where the services were in English. Here he was impressed by the serious and careful attention the parishioners gave to their Christian lives and to their worship, as well as by Fr Stephen Keaschuk's prayerful attentiveness to everything he did, particularly in the Altar. One month after coming to St Herman's, the young Ron became an acolyte. One year later, at age twenty, he was ordained a sub-deacon by Metropolitan Vladimir (Nagosky).

For the next ten years he immersed himself in the life of the parish, serving as sacristan, director of music, and treasurer. During this time he began to think of becoming a priest. Thus while holding full-time employment, he began to work on and later completed the Late Vocations Program of studies. After his marriage to Brenda Machnee, also a member of St Herman's, on December 26 at the age of 32, he was ordained a deacon.

The next formal step toward ordination to priesthood came during the All American Council in 1999, where Deacon Ron was interviewed by three priests who probed his call to, and fitness for priesthood. The results of both the exam, previously written in 1996, and this 1999 interview were given to the Holy Synod of Bishops for further

discussion. Meanwhile Deacon Ron decided that he needed a year of study and interaction with other seminarians and decided to study for the academic year 1999/2000 at St Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

Supporting her husband's pursuit of the priesthood at home in Edmonton, and caring for two-year old Michaelene, Brenda works as a nurse to pay the bills. She began her life in rural Saskatchewan in a Baptist home. In 1987 she was received by Chrismation into the Orthodox Church by His Grace Bishop Antoun of the Antiochian Archdiocese, along with many other parishioners of the former Evangelical Orthodox Church. Her area of special interest in parish life is leading children and young adults to a relationship with God. She also enjoys offering hospitality.



*Father Ron, Matushka
Brenda, and
Michaelene*

With the Holy Synod's blessing, Bishop Seraphim ordained Deacon Ron to the Holy Priesthood during the seminarian's Christmas break. But this journey to full-time service is not over. After completing his year at St Vladimir's, Fr Ron hopes to spend another year—this time closer to home—concentrating on Biblical studies to enrich his preaching and teaching. These areas are at the heart of his desire to serve the Church.

Fr Ron and Brenda are grateful for the support of their family and friends as well as St Herman's parish. Prayer, help with child-care, and some financial assistance have made their burden easier to carry. One semester of study at SVS (half a school year) costs \$6,400 (Canadian). This does not include personal expenses such as travel.

We are blessed by the increased number of candidates coming forward and offering themselves for service in the Church. The dedication and commitment of this family as well as others who are presently preparing for priesthood gives the Church a cause for joy and hope. God is gracious to us. We must continue to open our hearts to the prayerful support of this necessary work.—*Presbytera Myra Reinheimer, Calgary AB*

Metropolitan teaches Edmonton faithful About altar consecration

The service consecrating the altar of St Herman of Alaska's Orthodox Church in Edmonton, Alberta took place on Sunday, December 12, 1999. Parishioners, their brothers and sisters in Christ, clergy from other Orthodox parishes, and family and friends were blessed not only with the opportunity to be part of this special time, but also to celebrate the occasion with Metropolitan THEODOSIUS and Bishop SERAPHIM.

By the Wednesday before the consecration, the antimimension, Holy Gospel, tabernacle, cross and altar cover—basically, *everything*—had been removed from the holy table. Stark and bare, it stood waiting in the middle of the sanctuary. Immediately to the left of the altar, materials were ready: mastic (a mixture of beeswax, frankincense and oil) for sealing and a burner to heat the mixture; rose water, wine and oil for washing and anointing; wooden dowels, four large stones and rope for securing and binding; icons of the Holy Evangelists; and aprons and sleeves to protect vestments. All was in place to receive the Holy Relics at Sunday's service.

Yet the consecration really seemed to begin on Saturday morning when Metropolitan Theodosius and Bishop Seraphim came to our church school. After visiting all the classes, they joined the children for closing prayers. Then His Beatitude sat down on the floor in the middle of the church with over thirty children around him and began talking. About St Herman. About saints and their relics. About his own experiences. And about his choice of relics for St Herman's. The children were the first to see and venerate the Holy Relics which would rest for all time in our altar—those of Martyrs Probus, Tarachus and Andronicus, martyred at Cilicia in the time of the Emperor Diocletian (284-305); Martyr Barbara, cell attendant and co-martyr of Saint Elizabeth, New Martyr of Russia (1918); Venerable Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America (1837); and Saint Alexis, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America (1909). And then the Metropolitan explained what would happen on Sunday.

Later that same day, after Vespers, His Beatitude again gathered the faithful—this time, older ones!—around

him and led them into the sanctuary where he explained in detail what would happen the next day. As the altar was unconsecrated, this was a rare occasion when all could enter the sanctuary. Full advantage was taken to draw near and see where the Relics would rest; how the icons would be affixed, the dowels driven in, the rope tied around the altar; and to learn the significance of each act.

We gathered earlier than usual on Sunday morning to anoint the temple with oil on each of the four walls and consecrate the altar. Throughout the service, which establishes and affirms the permanence of a community, the Metropolitan, for the third time, used teaching to draw us into an understanding of practices and remembrances of both Old and New Testament tradition and to give us a sense of the continuity between the Church of today and the Church throughout the centuries.

And during the rest of the weekend? Not unexpectedly, we regularly broke bread together! The church school children shared grilled cheese sandwiches with the two hierarchs; Vespers attendees noshed on a tempting spread after the service; and everyone headed to



Metropolitan Theodosius explaining how the altar will be consecrated.

a nearby hotel on Sunday for a post-Liturgy buffet, where a definite highlight was the Metropolitan's personally delivering a whole cake from the dessert table to the teen-and-twenty-something table where they had waited the longest to get something to eat!

It was a wonderful weekend that will live in the memory of young and old alike, as much for the altar consecration as for having Metropolitan Theodosius and Bishop Seraphim with us: reminding us, teaching us and showing us that we are one community in Christ, sealed, anointed, bound and blessed by the Lord's grace and love.—Eleanor Gasparik, Edmonton AB

Almsgiving in Christian life

Many Orthodox think of giving alms as a protestant invention. However, Fr Thomas Hopko, Dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, made a presentation on 7 February 1997 which shows that giving alms is not only Orthodox, but a crucial component of our life in Christ, and of our hope of salvation. David Grier of Saskatoon has here selected and summarized some of the key points on that tape, as follows.

When we want to consider anything we have to begin with God. We want to know God's will, know His teaching, and do His commands. Why? Because human life is created to be an imitation of God. As St. Paul says "... be imitators of God" (Eph 5:1 NKJ), and St Gregory of Nyssa says, "Christianity is an imitation of God, human life is made to be what God's life is." In fact the Orthodox Church teaches that our life is not only an imitation of God, it is the very participation in the life, the being, and the work of God.

So we want to learn about almsgiving? First we have to find out how the only true God, perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ, and Whom we are called to imitate, relates to the giving of alms. Since God does not command us to do anything that He is not doing Himself, we need to learn what He says, what He shows us, and what He does relative to almsgiving.

God is love and God is the lover of human beings. In our Church services He is called *philanthropos* (lover of mankind), and indeed God is the ultimate philanthropist. Again and again in the Old Testament we read that "the Lord is merciful, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." That He is merciful means that He gives, He shares, He acts in a philanthropic way. The Church even gives the title "merciful" to persons who act as God acts toward other people. St John the Merciful, for example, helped the people in a physical sense; he gave them what they needed.

God is merciful, so we have to be merciful. God is philanthropic, so we have to be philanthropic. The greatest command in the Gospel is "to love the Lord your god with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." All your strength means all your possessions, all that you have. The command is to love God with all that you own, all that is inside you. There is only one way that you can prove that you love God with all your strength and that is to love your neighbour. As Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 22:38-40, on these two commandments (loving God and loving your neighbour) hang all the Law and the Prophets. These two commandments sum up our faith.

The apostles taught love of the neighbour in the practical sense as an essential component of our life in Christ. In the first chapter of John, we learn that we love

one another because God first loved us. St John states that if one says "I love God" and does not love his neighbour, he is a liar. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees a brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

There is nothing we can do to deserve salvation. We are saved by faith through grace. But it is also Orthodox teaching that we prove what we are by what we do, not by what we say. By faith we are given the power and the grace to love one another as God loves us. This is done by action, by deeds—not by words. St Paul says that when the Lord comes in glory, He will judge us by what we have done, not said. God "will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom 2:6), a Biblical quotation also found in the liturgy of St Basil. The Lord's parable of the last judgment (Matt 25:31-46) says that He is not going to ask if you know the creed, or what church you went to, or what books you read, but did you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned. The only way we can express love for God is by what we do to, and for, those around us.

Jesus instructs us to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful. The Gospel of St Matthew devotes three chapters (5 to 7) to how to do this (the Sermon on Mount) ending with the command "you therefore be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." The perfect person is one who is merciful. In chapter 6, Jesus tells how to practice the three things essential to becoming a merciful person. These, in the order presented in the Gospel, are: giving alms, praying, and fasting. It is interesting that although most will say that they know that prayer and fasting are necessary for salvation, few realize that Jesus also spoke about the necessity of almsgiving in the same context. And He listed it first.

Let's take Great Lent. If almsgiving is as important as prayer and fasting, it should also be a focus of the Lenten services. A quick look shows that it is. Isaiah, in the first reading on the first day of lent tells us that God does not hear our prayers when we don't take care of the hungry, the poor, and the naked. This theme is repeated again and again throughout Lent. Here are two Lenten songs:

Come let us purify our souls with alms and mercy to the poor, not blowing the trumpet or publishing what we do in charity, lest our left hand know what our right hand has done and in vainglory steal from us the fruit of our alms. But let us plead in secret to the one who knows all secrets, Father forgive us our wrongs for You are the only lover of mankind.

. . . *Almsgiving and Our Life in Christ* . . .

If we set out hands to doing good, the effort of Lent will be a time of repentance for us, a means to eternal life for nothing saves so much as giving to those in need. Alms inspired by fasting delivers a person from death. Let us embrace the giving of alms for it has no equal. It is sufficient to save our souls.

The authors of our liturgies, St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great, have some very strong words to say about almsgiving. They go so far as to say that if we do not give alms, we cannot be saved. St John said, "What is required is that we give . . . not much or little, but not less than is in our power. Think about the widow who gave her whole living, but you in the midst of your plenty are more stingy than she. Let us not be careless for our own salvation, but apply ourselves to almsgiving, for nothing is better than this as the time to come will prove. Feed the needy now or be ready forever to feed the fires of hell." St Basil said "He who takes another person's clothing is called a thief, but he who fails to clothe the naked if he could, deserves the very same name. The grain in your barns belongs to the hungry. The coat in your closet belongs to the naked. The shoes rotting in your basement belong to the barefoot. The silver hidden in boxes belongs to the needy. You sin against all those whom you are able to help but fail to do so."

What does the word "alms" mean? In the Greek, the phrase "when you give alms" literally means "When you do merciful acts" or "when you do the act done by a person who is merciful." So almsgiving is an act of mercy. And since God is the only merciful one, this could even be translated as "when you act the way God does" or "when you do divine activity." So the giving of alms is being and acting in a merciful way through concrete activity—the giving of gifts and caring for people in the most specific way, without which we cannot be saved.

Alms are concrete and specific acts of generosity, philanthropy, and mercy. They have to do with real physical bodily needs of people. Those who resemble and participate in God are given the grace by their faith to have the power to be philanthropic and merciful people, just as God is philanthropic and merciful.

Now, what about this word 'tithing' that is thrown around in the context of giving in the Church? Tithing was part of the law of the Old Testament. The people had to give 10% of their goods (crops, animals, time, etc.) to God. This was to remind them that their things were not really theirs. After they gave tithes (which was not a gift, but a requirement) they gave 'tithes of the tithes' to care for the sick and the poor (*i.e.* to practice mercy). Tithes were given to the temple for the glory of God (beautification of the temple), and part was for the teaching of the scriptures and the writing of the books of instruction (the support of the priests and scribes). Joachim and Anna,

the parents of the Theotokos, were examples of how the wealthy Israelites were expected to behave in the context of almsgiving. Being a wealthy man, Joachim gave 1/3 to temple, 1/3 to the poor and kept 1/3 for himself. His giving far surpassed the 10% required.

St Chrysostom, when he speaks about tithing, says "woe to him that does not give alms. If this was the case under the old covenant, much more under the new. For what did they of old not do? They gave tithes, and tithes upon tithes, for orphans and widows and strangers. Recently, someone said to me about a Christian, why such a person actually gives tithes. What a disgrace this expression implies. For what was not a matter of wonder even with the Jews under the law, has come to be a case of wonder for Christians."

Jesus came and fulfilled the law. And He said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees (who did give tithes and other acts of mercy) you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." He did not say, "you must give 10% to be saved." He said to the rich man that wanted to know what he should do besides obeying the commandments, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt 19:21). When the disciples expressed how impossible this appears, Jesus replied in verse 26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." The early Christian view was that Christians were to be the poor because as St Paul writes, it is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:2).

The Bible teaches that one of the greatest obstacles to divine life is possessions, because they tend to strangle. In the parable of the sower, the cares of life (riches) grow up like weeds and choke the good seed so that it cannot grow. The epistle of St James says that love of money is the root of all evil—not money itself, but the love of it. The Psalms tell us that when riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Jesus says it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. This is because when possessions come, people want to protect them, to build bigger barns. The more we get, the more we think we need and the more concerned we have that people will steal our things. Judas' problem was avarice. He loved money more than the Lord. That is what love of money can bring you to—to crucify God Himself for some money.

The clear lesson is that we must guard ourselves against the love of money for our own salvation. How? By sharing. By doing acts of mercy that cause us to be merciful like God is merciful. By returning a portion to

continued, next page . . .

. . . Almsgiving and Our Life in Christ . . .

Almsgiving, *continued from p.9:*

the one that gave us all that we have. From the earliest days of the Christian Church, people have been called to give. The Gentiles were required "to remember the poor" as a condition of entering the church (Gal 2:9-10).

But how much is enough? We are not called to be destitute. We still have to provide for our families, be responsible members of society able to withstand downturns in the economy without running to the government for handouts. How do we know that we are giving enough to save our souls? We need to grasp clearly the vision of why we give. Our measure is that we are to be giving enough that we are not caught by our possessions. We are to love God with all our possessions (all our strength), so we know that they are from God and know they are not ours and therefore are willing to share them and give them away. Because if we do not, we do not in fact know the love of God. That is how concrete the teaching on almsgiving is.

Why are we so reluctant to talk about this? Why are we shy to ask people who are wealthy, and appear to be good Christians, to give? We listen to admonishments about how we the people don't pray and fast as we should and say to the priest "That was good, we need to hear that." But if we are told we are materialistic, we hang onto our goods, we build bigger houses, and we are outraged. The fact that this subject is "off limits" is a victory of the devil. If it has to be done, it has to be spoken about, it has to be pointed out, it has to be taught. People have to be encouraged, to be inspired, and perhaps even rebuked if this particular area of their life is not according to the will of God. Because without almsgiving, the prayer and the fasting are unto condemnation and judgment. Unless the love is expressed in concrete acts, then it is not really love. We are to use our strength (our possessions) for the glory of God and for the good of people. If people don't know this, how can they be expected to do it?

So we need to remember that it does not only say when you pray and when you fast, it also says when you give alms. The fathers don't only write liturgies and teach about prayer and fasting, they also write books about Lazarus and the rich man. The actual activity of "acts of mercy" is as much a part of our faith as divine liturgy, as fasting guidelines, as candles, as Jesus prayers, as vestments, as icons, and so on.

We also need to remember that in the same way we can idolize liturgy, prayer, and fasting, so can we idolize almsgiving. People can give out of pride rather than love (1 Cor 13). It has to be done in love. It has to be done in secret, so as not to be noticed or thought well of. But it still has to be done. In fact even those that give for the

right reason can become noticed, praised, and then fall into the sin of loving the praise. St Chrysostom says that any decent person can stand insults, but only a saint can stand praise. God knows He will be praised and glorified and thanked for his great acts of mercy, but He does not do them to be praised, glorified and thanked. With God's help, let us be as we are called to be—imitators of God.

Jesus spoke about the wisdom of storing up when appropriate. He said don't go to war unless you have a large enough army. Don't start to build a tower unless you have enough to finish it. In the parable about the talents (money), giving it out at interest was called a wise thing to do. Money and possessions are not bad in themselves. They are not only good, they are necessary. We are required by God to take care of our own families. And even the monks who take vows of poverty have to eat. The epistle of St James asks "what is pure religion?" The answer is to care for the widows and the orphans and to keep oneself unspotted from this world. There is nothing wrong with storing up goods to have them to give to the poor. It is storing them up just to have them that Jesus spoke against.

We have to be careful that what we possess is used in a Christian way even after we die. For example, someone could own a house and not have a will. When that person dies, the value of that property could easily end up with half of it in the hands of the state and the other half to some non-Christian relative. That is not Christian behaviour. We have a responsibility to make sure our goods are used to serve God even after we die. We should be sure we have a will that ensures our possessions are used for the love of God. If we care about other people, we will care about what happens to our possessions, that they are used in a Christian manner.

We are to be free from the power of our possessions so that we can be saved. We are to possess only what we need so that we can take care of ourselves and those we are responsible for. The more we possess, the more danger are we in of being entrapped by them, and the more we need to share them with others and use them for the good of the Church and people. At the same time we must manage our finances and our possessions in a way that those dependant on us are taken care of. When riches increase, we must not set our hearts on them. St Paul said "I know how to want and how to abound. But whether I want or whether I abound, I am God's." He also said "possess these as if not possessing them." It appears that in almsgiving, as in all of our life, the answer is balance.

To order the tape of Fr Thomas Hopko's lecture that was the basis of this summary article, please call St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary Bookstore at 914-961-2203.

Ottawa parish helps shelter

For approximately three years, a priest and several of the faithful of Annunciation/St Nicholas' Cathedral in Ottawa have been making soup and sandwiches for a local women's shelter. The project, in coordination with other groups, is undertaken every two weeks for three months, then there is a break, after which the church begins providing the food again.

The Dean of the Cathedral, Archpriest Andrew Morbey, is the official "soup-maker" (sometimes "salad-maker" if it's summer), and some of the faithful from the church provide sandwiches. Parishioner Jane Szepesi reports that it is always a nice, sociable time at the church on those special Thursday mornings when the soup and some of the sandwiches are being made. At right, Fr Andrew and a shelter volunteer are shown delivering a steaming pot, along with bags of sandwiches.



Child sponsorship in Ukraine

Four years ago a few concerned persons in western Canada were informed of the desperate needs of children in Ukraine—children suffering in deep of poverty. On a personal basis, we tried to maintain a project of trying to do something, but the needs were overwhelming. In our struggle to find help we were informed of "Child Care International." This is a sponsorship programme based in a community of Christians who are themselves poor, in Springhill, Nova Scotia. Caring for needy children and families in twenty countries, Fr Pat Cosgrove, president of Child Care International, agreed to accept Ukraine also under its care.

Many thanks to Fr Pat and his organization who insist that over 90% of the sponsors' funds go to the sponsored child. In January of 1999 we sponsored our first children in Ukraine, and one year later we have 400 children. We are hoping to sponsor another 300 this year.

Fr Pat, who had never been to Ukraine, joined the 1999 summer Pilgrimage Tour to Ukraine with Bishop Seraphim and Fr Dennis Pihach. Each tour participant knew before leaving Canada that we would be in contact with these children. From everyone's luggage toys and candies were brought. The tour group made a lot of children very happy! While in Ukraine, we visited homes of some of the sponsored children and we were able to

experience how the Child Care programme works, and what are the needs. For example, we found families of four to six living in a one- or two-room apartment, perhaps with some water but never with hot water or functioning bathrooms. This is too common a situation, and many live more poorly yet.

We visited the Ternopil project, and towards the end of the tour Fr Pat encouraged us to open another project in another place. We recently opened the Pochaiv Project that includes children in the city of Lviv and in Holoby, a small rural community in Volhynia, both under the care of the local Orthodox Church.

Sponsorship means helping to lift up a child (along with the family to some extent) trapped in poverty, providing educational and other opportunities, and, most importantly, giving children hope because someone cares for them. The cost of sponsorship is only \$29.00 per month. This helps a child to receive food, clothing, school supplies and medical attention. As in similar projects, there is direct correspondence with the sponsored child, with translations. This is, simply put, one of the most effective and productive ways to give alms.

The Archdiocese is participating in this work, and supporting it. Brochures and other information are being sent to the parishes to make the project available. Those not in our parishes, but who would like more information, could phone directly to Child Care International at 1-800-267-2923.—*Savelia Curniski, Saskatoon*



Orthodox Scouting Award

Shown in the photograph at the left is the presentation by Bishop Seraphim and Archpriest Andrew Morbey of the first level Medal of St George to Girl Guide Rebecca Dixon in Annunciation/St Nicholas Cathedral in Ottawa on 5 December 1999. This is a part of the fulfilment of the Religion in Life badge in Scouting. The St George programme, which aims to help the young Scout explore the basic fundamentals of the Orthodox Christian Church, is available from the USA, and was contacted through the Internet. Information is also available from the Cathedral in Ottawa, and from the Archdiocese of Canada office.

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