

CANADIAN ORTHODOX MESSENGER MESSAGER ORTHODOXE CANADIEN

Go there and make disciples of all nations Matt 28:19
New Series 32:2 Winter 2013

Allez, faites de toutes les nations des disciples Matt 28:19
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BISHOP IRÉNÉE'S NATIVITY GREETING



English to follow

LE CHRIST EST NÉ!
GLORIFIONS-LE!

Aux honorables membres
du clergé, vénérables
moines et moniales, ainsi
qu'aux pieux fidèles de
l'Archidiocèse du Canada
de l'Église orthodoxe en
Amérique,

Mes bien-aimés frères/sœurs, enfants bénis dans le
Seigneur,

C'est avec une grande joie que notre Mère l'Église
nous invite à glorifier Dieu pour la présence aimante et
personnelle sur terre de Son Fils Unique, notre
Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus Christ.

Il nous faut donc nous pencher très
attentivement sur la signification donatrice de vie de
l'Incarnation du Fils de Dieu. Il est révélé à l'humanité
que Dieu est personnel, car Il s'est manifesté
personnellement à nous comme petit Enfant. Il nous
est également révélé que Dieu nous embrasse de Son
amour inconditionnel et qu'Il nous donne en Christ un
exemple de Son amour.

Tel que nous l'avons souvent entendu, le
commandement de Dieu de nous aimer les uns les
autres est à la fondation de notre foi. Le véritable
amour chrétien « est patient et plein de bonté; l'amour
n'est point envieux; l'amour ne se vante point, ne
s'enfle point d'orgueil; ne fait rien de malhonnête, ne
cherche point son intérêt, ne s'irrite point, ne
soupçonne point le mal; ne se réjouit point de
l'injustice, mais se réjouit de la vérité; excuse tout,

--- "GREETING" CONT'D PG 2 ---

Orthodox Education: Examples and Stories around the Archdiocese

E ducation is important part of many Orthodox
Christians' lives and parishes whether it be in the
form of Bible studies, youth groups, catechesis or sem-
inary. These often form an important aspect of develop-
ing and strengthening each community's spiritual life
and general understanding of the basics of the faith. Dif-
ferent parishes and groups do things differently to ad-
dress the specific needs of each parish and, sometimes,
with varying degrees of success. In the current issue of
the COM, we decided to look at some of the educational
programs in our parishes and institutions in an attempt to
share experiences, not so much to make "normative" de-
clarations but, rather, to make some descriptive sugges-
tions..

What follows are some articles exploring some
educational activities in a few parishes, the educational
opportunities available at our Canadian Orthodox edu-
cational institutions and what happens when a growing
parish gets together to discuss how a community with
many small children can worship together in peace. We
hope these offerings give some valuable suggestions that
prove helpful and we invite any ongoing submissions on
the topic of Orthodox education whether it be home-
schooling, university education or any other educational
initiative.



*"The soul is sanctified and purified through the study of
the Fathers, through the memorization of the psalms
and of portions of Scripture, through the signing of
hymns and through the repetition of the Jesus Prayer.
Devote your efforts, therefore, to these spiritual things
and ignore all the other things."*

St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia

Special Features:

- *Holy Noise: Children in Church, or, What to do with so
Many Kids in Church Pg 3*
- *Canadian Orthodox Educational Institutes ... Pgs 6-8*
- *Parish Education: Two Examples ... Pgs 9-10*

croit tout, espère tout, supporte tout. L'amour ne périt jamais. » (1 Corinthiens 13:4-8). L'Apôtre de l'amour, saint Jean l'Évangéliste, dit que « Celui qui n'aime pas n'a pas connu Dieu, car Dieu est amour. » (1 Jean 4:8). Même la culture d'aujourd'hui nous donne à entendre les mots de la célèbre chanson « Tout ce dont vous avez besoin, c'est d'amour; l'amour est tout ce dont vous avez besoin » (J. Lennon et P. McCartney).

Dieu nous aime d'un très grand amour. Nous vivons sous Sa paternelle protection et conduite chaque jour de notre vie. Malheureusement, ce ne sont pas tous Ses enfants, dont l'existence même est un cadeau de Son amour, qui en viennent à connaître le Christ et à faire une expérience personnelle de Son amour. Et nous ne donnons pas tous de notre amour au Christ, nous n'avons pas tous part à Sa vie, Sa grâce et à Ses autres dons innombrables. « Ainsi tu n'es plus esclave, mais fils; et si tu es fils, tu es aussi héritier de Dieu par Christ. » (Galates 4:7).

De nos jours, la société est confrontée à toutes sortes de détresses. La vie humaine semble être dénuée de sens. Comme l'a écrit le métropolite Tikhon dans sa récente lettre pastorale : « Chaque jour, les bulletins de nouvelles nous apportent des images de conflits, souffrances et tragédies ayant eu lieu en plusieurs endroits, tel en Ukraine, en Syrie et aux Philippines. Ce sont des images de conflit civil et de confrontation de citoyens avec le pouvoir (Ukraine), de violence et de terrorisme (Syrie), de souffrances entraînées par un désastre naturel (Philippines). » Nous semblons avoir

oublié l'unité de l'Église et l'amour du prochain. Le Seigneur dit : « Ce que je vous commande, c'est de vous aimer les uns les autres. » (Jean 15:17) et « je prie ... afin que tous soient un, comme toi, Père, tu es en moi, et comme je suis en toi, afin qu'eux aussi soient un en nous, pour que le monde croie que tu m'as envoyé. » (Jean 17:21).

Chers frères et sœurs, je vous salue avec amour paternel et grande joie en ce temps béni de la Nativité. À l'occasion de la grande et glorieuse fête de la venue du Fils et Verbe de Dieu dans le monde, je voudrais une fois encore vous rappeler que dans Son amour infini pour l'humanité, le Fils de Dieu est descendu du Ciel et s'est incarné pour que nous puissions avoir part à l'amour divin. Accomplissons tous le commandement d'amour donné par Dieu et élevons tous nos ferventes prières vers le Christ, afin qu'Il nous accorde cette bénédiction d'avoir des dispositions pacifiques à l'égard les uns des autres. Puissions-nous nous rappeler que par Lui seul, nous pouvons arriver à transcender la corruption et l'isolement d'une existence sans amour. Que c'est avec Lui seul que nous pouvons cultiver une communion d'amour entre nous tous. Que c'est uniquement de cette manière que nous atteindrons le but ultime de notre vie et accomplirons sur terre la mission salvatrice de Dieu.

Le Christ est né! Glorifions-Le!



BISHOP IRÉNÉE'S NATIVITY GREETING

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

To the Honorable Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and Pious Faithful of the Archdiocese of Canada, The Orthodox Church in America

My beloved brethren and blessed children in the Lord,

It is with great joy that Mother Church calls us to glorify God for the loving and personal presence on earth of His only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour,

Jesus Christ.

We must, therefore, examine very carefully the life-giving significance of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It reveals to humanity that God is personal for He made His personal manifestation to us as a little Child. It also reveals to us that God embraces us with His unconditional love and He gives us in Christ an example of His love.

God's commandment to love one other is the foundation of our faith, as we have heard many times. True Christian love "suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not

provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails ..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). The Apostle of love, Saint John the Evangelist, says that, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Even in today's culture we hear the words of the famous song "All you need is love, love is all you need" (J. Lennon and P. McCartney).

God's love for us is very great. We live under His Fatherly protection and guidance every day of our lives. Sadly, not all of His children, whose very existence is a gift of His love, come to know Christ and experience His love in a personal way. And not all of us give our love to Christ and share in His life, His grace and His other boundless gifts to us. "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7).

Today all forms of distress confront society. Human life seems to be meaningless. As Metropolitan Tikhon wrote in his recent Pastoral Letter, "Every day, news reports bring us images of conflict, suffering and tragedy in many places such as Ukraine, Syria and the Philippines. These are images of civil conflict and confrontation of citizens with power (Ukraine); violence and terrorism (Syria); the suffering brought about by natural disaster (Philippines)." We seem to forget the unity of the Church and love for each other. The Lord says, "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:17) and "I pray ... that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you with fatherly love and great joy during this blessed Nativity season. On this great and glorious feast of the coming of the Son and Word of God into the world, I would like to remind you once again that in His infinite love for mankind, the Son of God came down from Heaven and was incarnate, so that we could become partakers of the divine love. Let us all fulfill God's commandment of love and let us raise our fervent prayers to Christ to bless us with a peaceful attitude to one another. May we remember that it is only through Him that we can transcend the corruption and isolation of an existence without love. Only with Him can we cultivate a communion of love among us all. Only in this way will we fulfill the ultimate goal of our life and accomplish God's salvific mission on earth.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!



Holy Noise, or, What to do with So Many Kids in Church

Many of our parishes are quickly filling up with many young children - which is nothing but a great blessing. But with blessings come temptations and so it is with so many children in Church. As the Liturgy proceeds and as the children begin to fidget and make more and more noise, things start to become complicated and distracting. This has been the experience at the Annunciation Orthodox Cathedral in Ottawa and a number of concerned parents along with the clergy met early in July 2013 to discuss how best help children be welcome and interested, to participate in the liturgy while not unnecessarily disrupting it, and, finally, how to encourage an atmosphere conducive to prayer for both young and old alike.

What follows is not intended as a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Each community is presented with unique challenges and will, therefore, need to discern what works best for their unique situation. Please view the following notes in this light. It is also worth noting that since this initial town hall meeting, the cathedral community has made great strides toward helping all to humbly pray as they are able within the context of the Liturgy. May God help us all.

Notes from Town Hall Meeting on children in the Cathedral, July 2013

- The overriding message: children are welcome in the church. No one should be made to feel unwelcome because of their children and no one should be hurt by others within the temple. This is the action of the enemy of our Salvation, trying to stop us from "becoming one as we [the Trinity] are one." We must keep this in mind as we endeavour to live out our lives together in Christ.

- We need to be at peace ourselves when we come to church for our kids to feel at peace. They are the barometers of our mood and emotional state. Being calm and confident in our parenting and in our kids' ability is conducive to prayer.

Basic practices for parents with children:

- Have home life be an extension of church life (i.e. our table is an extension of the altar table, the icon corner(s) in the home as extension of the icons in the church).

- Prepare children to attend church with reverence and anticipation. We need to help our children be ready to

--- "HOLY NOISE" CONT'D PG 4 ---

receive the gifts before we leave our homes. Also remind them that church is somewhere we behave differently than we do in other places.

- Pick your spot in the church and have it be your home base.
- Refrain from always chasing kids but rather encourage them to stay close to you.
- Accept help of others in directing children back to you. Try to remain calm and at peace where you are. We are encouraged to be at the front, though having all of our children in a concentrated area will be difficult for them. Spread ourselves about in the space.

- Make rounds venerating icons before Liturgy starts. If late, venerate icons of Christ and the Theotokos at the back and the central icon, then go to your spot and venerate afterwards. If child wants to venerate an icon across the church during the Liturgy, redirect to an icon close by.
- If you arrive during the Gospel, step just inside the door, then move to your spot.
- If your child is having a difficult time, it is better to leave the temple (going to the Narthex or outside) and remain calm and relaxed rather than staying inside and becoming stressed and anxious. Remind children that you are not going out to play, that our place is in the church. We are just going out briefly to blow off steam and then returning. There may be some Sundays where you spend more time outside than in, but these days will be few and far between.
- It is preferable not to make the rounds venerating icons as a form of diffusing a blow-up, as the icons then become a form of distraction.
- Try not to come to church saying, "this is the Liturgy to make it through with them", but be open to having to leave. Even if you go out with them, this is still time set apart for God. It will get better - this time with our young children is really very short.

How do we foster early engagement in the Liturgy? It's nigh impossible to expect especially the littlest ones to stand quietly without distraction for the entire service. Here are some key moments in the Liturgy we should highlight for them when they are very young as a



foundation:

Point out moments of activity

- Entrance/opening of Royal Doors = stand up
- Censing = what is the pattern, where is he going?
- Blessing = bow
- Invocation of the Trinity/blessing with the sign of the cross = cross oneself

Particular points to highlight

- Have children sing "Amen" after "Blessed is the Kingdom..."
- Children can relax during litanies
- Bow at "Come Let us Worship"
- Stand for Gospel
- Ask children to think of three people to pray for during the Litany after the Gospel
- Stand for Anaphora, say "Amen" during "And make this bread the precious Body of your Christ..." and if possible, for all prayers
- Stand for Our Father and when old enough, have them sing along
- Try to help them remain calm and silent during preparation for Communion and during Communion itself
- Remind children to thank God after receiving Communion, quietly ask them to think about what they are thankful for; if people try to engage them while Communion is still being distributed, teach them to simply smile and nod, that this is not the time for chatting.
- Appropriate activities during Liturgy for the children under 6. Is reading/looking at books, or cuddling of a

toy alright as long as they are done quietly and without distracting others?:

- Father James suggested bringing a specific book to church. Suggested the Guardian Angel Children's Prayer Book as a great idea to help keep children engaged.

- Make a book with icons special to the family and photos of Godparents and other people who pray for her in the church.

- A stuffed toy for comfort is fine. There was some disagreement between parents on the topic of bringing toys to church: some parents felt it set a difficult precedent for kids as they get older (they are used to having a distraction, so they expect it to continue as they get older) while others felt that age appropriate toys are alright when they are young, because they are still hearing the words of the Liturgy.

- We need to teach our children to be in the space without needing to be distracted; kids should not have too many activities for distraction because this stops them from being engaged.

- Snacks should be given outside the temple in the narthex and then return.

Boundaries in the Cathedral's space:

- The Ambon and steps leading to it are not for children during the Liturgy, save receiving Communion. Icons can be venerated there before or after the Liturgy.

- The Cathedra is only for the Bishop or the deacons reading the Gospel.

How we should respond if we as parents or our children are approached by fellow parishioners in an inappropriate way during the Liturgy.

- As simply as saying, "Forgive me. I am trying my best. Please come with me to talk with the priest after Liturgy." Talk to the priest anyway even if they do not come with you.

- We don't know what others are going through when they come to Liturgy. It may be difficult in the moment, but we need to remember this, try to see the good in what they were trying to do and pray for them.

- How to explain to little girls why they can't serve if they ask to. How to help them feel equally a part of services outside the altar.

Not everyone can be a priest/deacon/server - and being a man does not allow automatic entry to the altar.

- We must teach them that while the altar is an area set apart in the temple, those outside the altar are by no means lesser. We are all a part of the Church.

The Church the West Forgot: the Church of the East

Part Two of Two

Orthodox Christians who live in North America are keenly aware of the reality – and tragedy – of Christian divisions. We interact with non-Orthodox Christians on a daily basis, whether socially, professionally, or even within our own families. Yet we often know very little about other Christians. What do they believe? What is their story? In this series of articles Dr. David Wagschal, instructor of church history at the Orthodox Studies Program at Trinity College in Toronto, explores some of the great schisms of the past, and considers prospects for future reunion.

By the ninth century the Church of the East, or East Syrian Church, had developed into the dominant Christian body of the Arab empire. Centered first in the old Persian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and later in nearby Baghdad, the church showed an extraordinary zeal for mission, extending its borders as far east as China and as far south as Yemen and the Indian coastlands. Although never the official religion of the Arab state, it managed to establish a precarious *modus vivendi* with its Islamic rulers as a legally recognized religious minority. This minority status entailed serious civil and social disabilities – and at times outright persecution – but the church flourished, and it became known for a vibrant monastic tradition as well as its great learning. The dominant language of liturgy and learning remained Syriac, a literary variant of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus and the Apostles.

By the twelfth century persecution had increased, and the church began to show signs of decline. The causes for this decline are not well understood. A major factor seems to have been – ironically – the crusades. Launched in the late eleventh century by the papacy to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, these military ventures had the unintended effect of turning Muslim opinion against the indigenous Christian bodies of the Middle East. From this point onward Muslim enforcement of anti-Christian legislation seems to have become much more stringent, and conversions to Islam increased sharply.

The East Syrian church nevertheless continued to thrive for several centuries. By the thirteenth century its many missions to east Asia had borne fruit among the newest power on the steppes, the Mongols. When the Mongols invaded the Middle East in the 1250s, the khans had among their wives and generals not a few East Syrian Christians. For a brief period at the end of the century it even seemed possible that the Il-khans themselves – by then the established rulers of almost the entire Middle East – would convert to Christianity and make common cause with the west against the region's

Canadian Orthodox Educational Institutes

It might come as a surprise to many that there are several institutes of higher Orthodox education in Canada. Most within the Archdiocese know about St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York as well as St. Tikhon's seminary in Pennsylvania but fewer know about the educational

opportunities afforded to us on Canadian soil. Each of the schools affiliated in some way with the Canadian Archdiocese have provided a brief introduction and description of their school. We hope this makes the faithful of the Archdiocese better aware of the schools of Orthodox studies available to them north of the 49th parallel and might encourage further education amongst the faithful.

The Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology: Bilingual and Inclusive Orthodox Theological Education for the 21st Century

From Modest Beginnings to a Full Range of Programmes

The Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology is the natural evolution of many years of labour in organizing Orthodox theology courses in Montreal, in both French and English, and in partnership with the Université de Sherbrooke, a recognized French-language university in southern Quebec with a campus close to Montreal, which had approached the Orthodox Christian community in an around Montreal fifteen years ago with the idea of establishing such courses.

Drawing on a pool of qualified professors at both the local and international levels, these grass-roots efforts culminated in the creation of undergraduate programmes in Orthodox theology at the certificate and bachelor's degree levels, followed by the establishment of a master's programme in Orthodox theology. In 2009, the opportunity to pursue a doctorate in an Orthodox setting, still a rarity in North America, was successfully secured. In the last fifteen years, over one hundred students have received a certificate or degree in Orthodox theology. And eight students are currently pursuing a Ph.D. under the auspices of the Institute.

Organizational Structure

Presided by John Hadjinicolaou, the founder and

driving force behind the Orthodox collaboration with the Université de Sherbrooke, the Institute is pan-orthodox in character and vocation, and was established with the blessing of the canonical bishops in Canada.



The Institute maintains close ties to many Orthodox parishes in the Montreal area, irrespective of jurisdiction, and relies heavily on its alumni and student network for student recruitment. The Institute's foremost public event is the annual theological colloquium held every spring and drawing a large number of participants. In addition to the talented group of local professors forming the Institute's Committee of Studies, several eminent Orthodox theologians from outside of

Canada are associated with the Institute. The Institute has also initiated a process of establishing formal and informal affiliations with other Orthodox institutions and seminaries.

Clergy Education

While the Institute does not primarily cater to preparing candidates for ordination, it does provide potential candidates with a firm theological grounding which is vital for critically evaluating received pastoral practices in light of the richness and depth of the Orthodox tradition. Several students have drawn on Institute resources as an important complement to preparing for the priesthood, as well as for continuing their theological education once they have been ordained.

Orthodox Studies at Trinity College of the University of Toronto

The Faculty of Divinity in Trinity College – one of the member colleges in the Toronto School of Theology – sponsors a full fourteen-course program of Orthodox Studies that is unique in Canada and rare in North America, because it offers a concentrated “major” in Eastern Christianity which leads to an accredited university graduate degree in Theology that also has certification from the Association of Theological Schools (the body which sets quality standards for academic theology programs in North America). Students who complete this program with 20 credits receive a Master’s Degree – usually an M.T.S. – from the University of Toronto plus a Diploma of Specialization in Orthodox/ East Christian Studies.

Besides the goal of degree-plus-Diploma, the Trinity program offers other options for adult study in Orthodoxy; students can seek the Diploma alone without six more courses for a Master’s degree, or they can take a reduced selection of the courses, or, for those who wish general learning without exams and essays, there is a non-credit auditing option which offers a Certificate in Orthodox Studies. Our goal is to provide the maximum opportunity for any adults interested in mature Orthodox learning. Our teaching philosophy is to educate an East-Christian leadership, both lay and clerical, well-grounded in Orthodox fundamentals, steeped in the original sources and writings of the Tradition, capable of mature reflection on theological topics of Orthodoxy, and particularly thoughtful about issues of Orthodoxy in contemporary society, especially in a North American context.

Completing the Diploma requires fourteen courses, covering a full range of Orthodox fundamentals: Orthodox reading of Old and New Testaments (including critique of historic-critical methodology), three courses on thought and theology 1st C. to the present day, three on Church History, two on liturgies, offices, and sacraments,

one on iconology, two on “Pastoralia” – sermons, catechesis, letters, and monastic writings – 2nd C. to the present, and as a summative climax, a course on Orthodoxy and the modern world – bioethics, environment, politics, interfaith, role of women, etc. (The content of traditional courses on “Systematics,” “Canon Law,” and “Dogmatics” is fully covered by completing the entirety of our curriculum). In every course, readings include original primary sources; we maximize teaching through classroom dialogue and text-analysis rather than lecture and rote. Trinity College counts all fourteen Orthodox courses toward the 20 credits for the Master’s, so Degree students need only six more electives chosen from the entire Toronto School of Theology range of courses, including “practical” subjects e.g. Missiology, or a detailed theological topic in depth, or some Anglican, Protestant, or Catholic theologies, or ecumenical relations. We have sponsored six major conferences on Orthodox topics, plus guest lecturers e.g. Fr. John Behr, Dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary, or Fr. John Breck on bioethics.

Most of our Orthodox students are full-time working adults, so teaching is in the evening and part-time; but with two courses per semester plus one in summer the Diploma can be earned in three years and the Master’s degree in a fourth. Since we are the only English-speaking academic program in Orthodoxy in the GTA, our classrooms become a lively pan-Orthodox meeting place – up to now, we have had students from the OCA, GOA, ROCOR, Bulgarian and Romanian (both OCA and Patriarchal), Carpatho-Russian, Ethiopian, Coptic, Syriac, and Eastern-Catholic Churches, together with several non-Orthodox students from Toronto School of Theology who enroll in our courses to learn something of the Orthodox Tradition and vision, since we are the first Orthodox faculty in the TST consortium.

For more details or information contact Prof. Richard Schneider, 416-532-5488 or eastorthodox@trinity.utoronto.ca, or the Admin. Asst. Sidney Yeung 416-978-2133



REFLECTIONS ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SAINT ARSENY ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE – 2003 – 2013



St Arseny Institute has a history of ten years and can be compared to a well-rooted tree, with regular pruning over the years. This tree is planted in fertile soil here in Canada and has grown to some stature. Because of its stature, it is visible for you to see. I speak of its visibility because it has contributed to the preparation of Laity, Readers, and Deacons and Priests for service in the Archdiocese of Canada. In this work the Institute has welcomed and utilized the knowledge and expertise of a number of clergy and laity within the Archdiocese. St. Arseny Institute is committed to cooperation with all other institutions in Canada for the purpose of providing a united and complete program of theological education – academic and spiritual – for all individuals who are called to serve the Holy Orthodox Church! This is what St Arseny has to offer:

- 1) Twenty-two correspondence courses (some can be taken locally) which prepare students to be Deacons or Readers or lay-leaders in the Archdiocese;
- 2) A library housed in the University of Winnipeg;
- 3) Instructors across Canada and in the United States of America;
- 4) An administration staff to support the work of the Instructors;
- 5) An on-line Academic Journal edited by Father Deacon Dr. Lasha Tchantouridze;
www.cjoc.ca
- 6) A website: www.saintarseny.ca;
- 7) A plan for the future, including on-line education;
- 8) A proven track record – academic and financial;
- 9) An invitation to all who desire to contribute to or support this work
- 10) A small scholarship fund (contributions are welcome for this fund and the operations of the SAI. Make out to "Treasurer - Archdiocese of Canada" for SAI)

Our Tenth Anniversary was celebrated at the Assembly in Ottawa on Wednesday, August 21, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Pan-Orthodox Vacation Church School in Hamilton

HAMILTON, ON - A decade-and-a-half worth of commitment is paying spiritual dividends for Orthodox parishes in Hamilton, Ontario.

Each summer, during the last week of July, Orthodox clergy and faithful from across the city team up to sponsor a week-long Vacation Church School (VCS), providing students from ages 5 to 15 practical spiritual teaching and worship to help them live as Orthodox Christians today.

"It is remarkable to see Orthodox Christians from so many cultural backgrounds bound together by a commitment to our shared faith. Placing Orthodox Christianity as our first priority has held this work together all these years," said Father Geoffrey Korz, Co-ordinator of the VCS.

Each day begins with a Typica service, a sermon, and lessons in various methods of Orthodox chant. A variety of themes and workshops over the years have prepared students for church care, prosphora making, and iconography. Two favorite workshops have been training acolytes for the altar, and preparing students to make floral icons for feast days.

"In some communities, there has been a break in passing on the practical skills of church life," said Father Geoffrey.

"If a young person has nothing they can contribute to parish life, and if they don't understand how to read an icon, how to pray at home each day, or how to confess, why would we expect them to retain their faith? We must not set up Orthodox young people to fail; we

--- "PAN-ORTHODOX" CONT'D PG 10 ---



Mission of St. John on Shanghai in Vancouver

At St John of Shanghai Orthodox Church in Vancouver, BC, education happens in a number of ways. A Sunday school program has recently begun for the younger children of the parish. Beyond that, Fr Justin Hewlitt leads most educational efforts. Fr Justin explains, in his own words, what those efforts include:

1. Sunday, after lunch, I lead an open catechumens/inquirers class which is primarily question-based. In other words, there is little structure

other than me answering whatever questions the catechumens and inquirers come up with. Occasionally regular parishioners will also drop in on these (as they are welcome to do).

2. Wednesday, after Little Compline, we have a discussional study. Historically, these study sessions have mostly worked through books of the Bible, but recently we have been reading other books together. Our first non-book-of-the-Bible-study was

must prepare them to win, spiritually speaking."

The lives and examples of the saints have played a central part in many years of the VCS program, including the saints of North America. This year, the theme focuses on the varied miraculous icons of the Mother of God, and the aspects of her life which provide an example of holy living for Christians to emulate.

Classroom instruction on the annual theme provides academic knowledge, through the devotion of a team of experienced volunteer teachers, several of whom were once VCS students in the early years of the program.

From thirty to sixty students enroll in the annual program, which is operated entirely on donations from local parishes and faithful, as well as community members: school supplies are often donated by a local

office supply store, food is donated and prepared by volunteers, and a local funeral home sponsors the tshirts. No students are turned away for reasons of cost. Each year, the program operates with a surplus that goes straight into preparing for the next year.

"We draw inspiration from many sources, including other parish initiatives like those in BC, Alberta, and Quebec," said Father Geoffrey. "Our biggest inspiration comes from the everyday life of the Church: learning to pray, learning to repent and to struggle spiritually, guarding the senses, and receiving our strength from God, not ourselves," he said.

"Really, that is what it means to pass on Orthodox Christianity to other people".

---Fr. Geoffrey Korz, *Parish of All Saints of North America, Hamilton ON*

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom's Beginning to Pray (which was wonderful!), and we have since been working our way through the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, which has been a very blessed meditative experience. Our approach with the Sayings has been to read a saying and then pause for a moment's meditation. If we do not understand the saying, we try to unpack what it means. If we can't figure it out, we may read it again and focus on it more intently - or we may simply drop it and move on to the next one. If the saying raises some question or some reflection from our own life, we share it - and sometimes get into quite extended discussions of The Way, as a result. Often, however, after the moment's meditation, we simply move on to the next saying. I've never done a study like this before, and have found it enormously edifying - I'll be rather sad when we finish the Sayings!

3. Saturday, an hour before Vespers, we have Church School for the children nine years old and older, led by myself. We've focussed on etiquette in church, gone through a very rapid overview of the whole Bible, engaged in the occasional Q&A session, and, right now, we're working our way through the book of Acts.

4. The next major parish educational project that I'll be involved in is choir education. We've been blessed with some really talented choir directors who have been always been intensively focussed on making sure the choir is not only practicing, but also knows what it is doing, and they've even experimented with a bit of



The St. John's Community

online education, which we're hoping to develop further. However, for a while now, our choir directors have been calling on me to step things up a bit and give the choir a bit more of the theological and practical "bigger picture", so I guess that's the parish educational project that I'll be involved in next!

--- Fr. Justin Hewlett, *Mission of St John of San Francisco and Shanghai, Vancouver BC*

Islamic rulers. Had this happened, the course of near-eastern history would have been changed unimaginably. However, it was not to be, and by the end of the 13th C the Mongol khans in the Middle East were solidly Muslim, and any dreams of a Christian-Mongol Levant had vanished.

From this time onward the Church of the East began to decline precipitously. In the wake of the devastating invasions of Timur Lenk ("Tamerlane", 1336-1405) many East Syrian communities across Asia simply blinked off the map, and the structure of the church showed increasing instability. Metropolitanates disappeared, communication with India and eastern missions faltered, and the Catholicosate itself (the East Syrian patriarchate) began to move from city to city.

Disruption and contraction continued throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Soon the church was confined mostly to the mountain fastnesses of what is now northern Iraq and Iran. In this period – often referred to as the period of the "Mountain Nestorians" – the Catholicosate became a hereditary office, passing from uncle to nephew, and the church increasingly took on the shape of a small ethnic minority living amongst a mostly Kurdish population. Already vulnerable, the community was further weakened by a series of divisions occasioned by attempts to reunite with Rome. This resulted in the creation of a "Uniate" East Syrian Church, today known as the Chaldean Church, which remains to this day out of communion with the Church of the East.

The worst was still to come. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the East Syrian church became embroiled in the machinations of the "Great Powers" to divvy up the dying Ottoman empire. Now reduced to perhaps 100,000–150,000 members, the church was soon drawn into a series of ethno-political border conflicts. Subject to deportation, starvation and ethnic cleansing, only about a third of its members survived to see the end of World War I, and many more were killed in subsequent decades.

The Church of the East survived this tragedy and has since made a remarkable recovery. Now widely scattered throughout the Middle East, numbers have increased to perhaps 400,000 with large communities in Iran, Iraq, Syria, India, and the Caucasus. (The Chaldean Church has an additional 400,000 members). There is also a sizable diaspora in Europe and the United States. The hereditary succession of the Catholicosate was abolished in 1975, and the current Catholicos, Mar Dinkha IV, resides in Chicago. Canada has one bishop,

Mar Emmanuel Joseph, based in Etobicoke. Five parishes exist in southern Ontario. *

The ancient Church of the East and the Byzantine Orthodox churches remain, sadly, in schism. The precise date of the schism is difficult to pinpoint, but since the Church of the East did not accept the Council of Ephesus, it is usually placed at 431 AD.

As is often the case, numerous factors contributed to the schism. Politically, a major factor was the conversion of the Roman empire to Christianity in the 4th C. This was a disastrous event for Persian Christians. It meant that East Syrian Christians now held the same religion as their nation's chief enemy – Rome! At a time when religion and citizenship were closely linked, this meant that it was a matter of survival for the Persian church to dissociate itself as much as possible from its western brethren. The pressure to maintain a political distance from the west would remain strong throughout the Muslim period.

The church was also culturally isolated from the west. The Church of the East "grew up" largely outside of the Greco-Latin cultural sphere. It had its own ancient liturgy and customs, its own ancient Christian language, and its own sophisticated theological tradition. Rooted in the Apostolic missions of Thomas, Bartholomew, and others, it looked with suspicion upon the philosophical overtones of western – i.e. Greek – theology, and so felt little inclined to look west for doctrinal guidance. As time went on, and the Latin/Greek and Syriac worlds became ever more estranged, this (mutual) isolation increased.

It was perhaps not inevitable that political and cultural distance would lead to theological distance, but ultimately the churches found themselves separated over a critical difference in doctrine. The issue was – and is – Christological: how do we understand who Jesus Christ is? Strongly influenced by "Antiochian Christology", the Church of the East tended to emphasize the duality of the divine and human in Christ. At its worst – a truly "Nestorian" position – this type of theology can make it sound as if Jesus is a compound of two separate persons or subjects, with two consciousnesses, united only by mutual consent or will. The Orthodox definition, by contrast, insists that we can only ever speak of one subject in Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, the Word of God, who, while remaining God, took on everything it was to be human (except sin): thus one person in two natures.

But are East Syrian Christians truly Nestorians? Theologians of the Church of the East often reject the

term, and it is a matter of debate among theologians and historians whether the Church of the East ever held a strictly Nestorian position. The problem is made particularly complex by language. By the time the Church of the East had articulated its official theological position – in the sixth and seventh centuries – its formulations were all in Syriac, and had been for centuries. This makes it exceptionally difficult to compare these formulas directly with western Greek (or Latin) formulas. Study of the matter continues.

---David Wagschal---

Want to learn more? See W. Baum and D. Winkler *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (Routledge 2010) or S. Mofett *A History of Christianity in Asia* 2 vols. (Orbis 1998).

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