

The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

"We are all called to be faithful and wise stewards, ever waiting for the coming of our Lord." LUKE 12:40-46

The Resurrection of Christ and Basis for Its Iconography

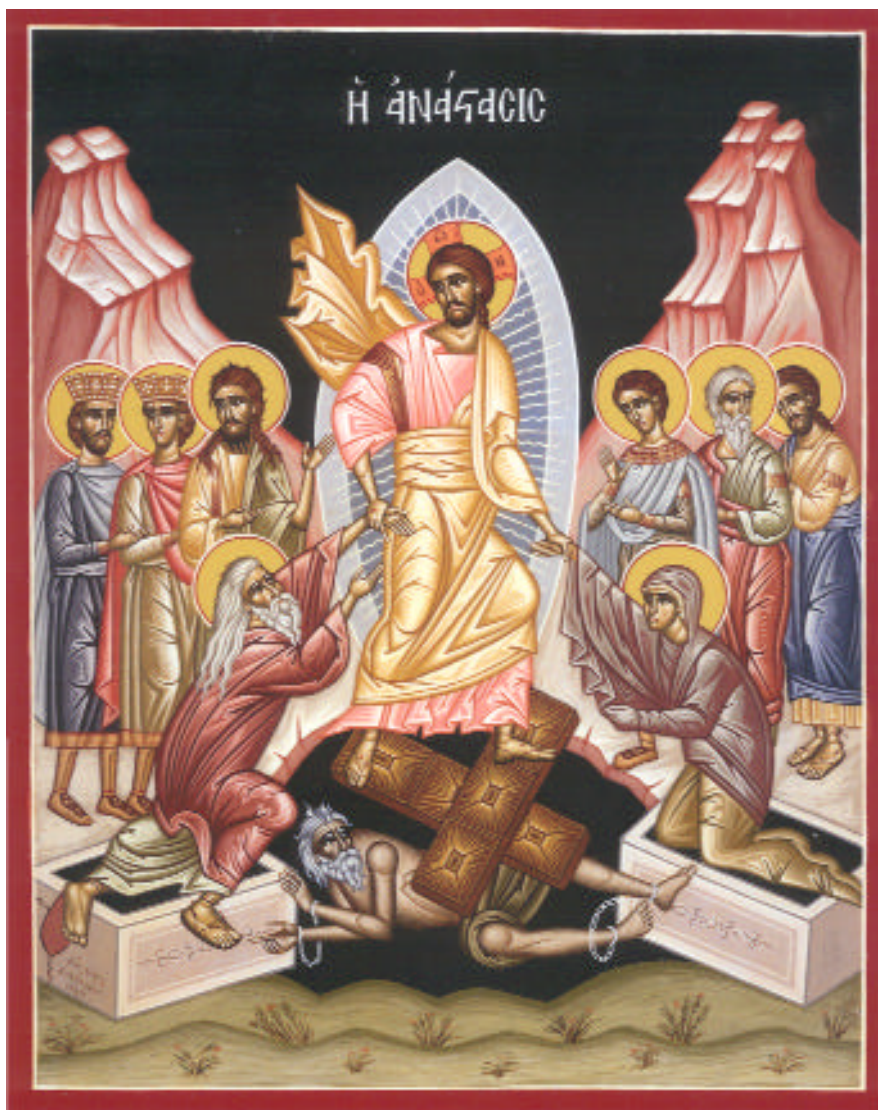
By Father Alexander Jasiukowicz, Iconographer

To understand the nature of the icon and to be able to read the contents of it, one has to understand the basis for a particular icon. In this article, examining representations of our Lord's Resurrection, we will explore the source of the canonical depiction in Orthodox iconography.

The Feast of Christ's Resurrection stands out among all the other feasts in the Orthodox Church. The utmost attention is paid to this event because of our Lord's final act in the redemptive mission of all mankind. According to St. Paul the Apostle: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15:17). This means that the hope of all followers of Christ throughout the ages would be of no importance or value to them—resurrection from the dead, the promised Kingdom of God would be nonexistent.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Resurrection and Iconography | 1 |
| Ordination | 5 |
| St. Xenia Orthodox Church Camp | 6 |
| On the Missions | 8 |
| Missionary Society News | 10 |
| New Icon For Saint Anna's | 11 |
| St. Demetrios Orthodox Church | 12 |
| Mother Thecla Becomes Abbess | 14 |
| Put the Faithful Steward in Your Will | 14 |
| Christian Attitude Toward Passions | 15 |



Scriptural Account

Not one evangelist tells us how Christ rose from the dead. The evangelists tell us only of the manifestations of the Risen Lord, they do not describe the actual Resurrection. St. Matthew comes nearest to describing the actual moment of Christ's Resurrection, when he tells us about the descent of an angel whose "appearance was like lightning" who rolled the

stone back from the entrance to the tomb “and sat upon it... And the guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became as dead men” (Mt. 28:2-4). This account was later taken by painters as a subject for the icon of the Resurrection of Christ. The genuine iconography of the Church shows the spiritual aspect of Christ’s Resurrection, ... the descent of the Victorious Lord into Hades, the freeing of Adam and Eve along with other prisoners of Hades of the Old Testament, and the factual witnessing of the Myrrhbearing women that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, that *He is risen*.

Distortions

A strong influence of Western realism (17th century) made its way into the homes and churches of Orthodox Christians. Iconography suffered a considerable blow from which it began to recuperate only in recent decades. One such picture, still popular, shows the Risen Lord emerging from the grave holding a banner of victory. The impression is that the stone was rolled away from the tomb in order to allow Christ to come out, an analogy with the raising of Lazarus, and the soldiers or guards at the cave were terrified not so much by the appearance of the angel as by the actual Resurrection. It is not hard to see what a profound distortion of the Gospel story such an artistic rendering or, more precisely, such a free reinterpretation gives.

The angel rolled the stone away not to let out the Risen Lord but, on the contrary, to show that He is not in the tomb: “He is not here: for He is risen,” and to give them who “seek Jesus, Who was cruci-

fied” the opportunity to be convinced by the emptiness of the tomb which they observed by their own eyes, by looking at the place “where the Lord was laid.”

The Resurrection was already accomplished before the descent of the angel, before the stone was rolled away; it was accomplished in an inexpressible manner, not susceptible to human vision. The soldiers could not have witnessed the Resurrection. The Evangelist clearly tells us that the women bearing the myrrh and spices were witnesses not only to the earthquake, the descent of the angel, but also to the terror of the fleeing men. The women were there when it happened. The angel, as though distinguishing them from the terrified soldiers, says, “do not be afraid” and then promises them that they will see the Lord at a later time. If the Myrrhbearers did not see the Resurrection then it is unlikely indeed that the soldiers had seen it.

Such distortive pictures of the truth in western imagination are not admissible in the language of canonical iconography in the Orthodox Church because they are foreign to Holy Scripture and Tradition. Imagination or misinterpretation of God’s revelation has no place in the doctrine of redemption. The Gospels are silent as to the fact of how Christ arose. Neither does the icon show it.

Why Silence?

If the light of the Lord’s Transfiguration was too strong for the Apostles to bear, how much stronger it would be at His Resurrection! If it were possible or beneficial for people to witness the actual Resurrection it would have been shown to them. A witness

could not follow Him to Hades where the conquest of darkness was taking place, nor could he casually observe the act of Almighty God at the Resurrection in the transfigured body. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a complex wonder beyond human physical grasp.

Hymnography

Our Church in her hymnology, just like in iconography, always remained faithful to the account given in the Gospels. The hymnody in the Divine Services helps us to understand the miracle of the Resurrection.

In the Paschal Canon (Ode 6:1), we sing: “Having kept the seals intact, O Christ, Thou didst rise from the tomb.” Not only was the stone not rolled aside, but the seal which was set on it was untouched at the moment of Christ’s Resurrection. And “Life shone forth from the grave,” into “the grave yet sealed.” The Risen Lord came forth from the grave in the same way as He came to the Apostles “though the doors were shut” (without opening them). He came out of the tomb without any outward signs which might have been noticed by outside observers. “Though enclosed within a grave in Thy circumscribable (that is limited by the usual laws of space and other material conditions of our life on earth) flesh, Thou didst arise, O Christ, Who art uncircumscribable (free of all present forms and not subject to earthly observation)” (Canon of St. Thomas Sunday, Ode 3:2). In particular: “The soldiers who guarded Thee did not feel the moment of Thy Resurrection.” Like the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of Christ remains a

mystery “sealed to those who seek for proof” (not subject to the researchers of human scholarship) and as a miracle, remains “the mystery of the Resurrection revealed in faith” (Sticharon, Plagal of First Tone). The ordinary scholar who would examine the mystery of the empty tomb will discover no more than was known to the soldiers themselves: that He Who was buried is not there, but that He is risen. And how He rose is a miracle revealed only to believers.

Mystery-Transfigured Body

It is impossible to imagine that the Lord, having risen from the place where they laid Him, should have cast off His winding sheet like ordinary clothes or, like Lazarus, had to be unwound by others. The grave clothes of the Risen Christ remained in the grave folded as they had been wrapped around the body of Him Who was laid to rest in the tomb, only that He was no longer in them. This is the lesson to be learned from the Gospel account of how “the napkin, that was about His head” was found “not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.” This means that the napkin remained folded as it was bound about the head of Christ. It is not hard to understand why it was “that the disciple,” as soon as he set his eyes on the abandoned grave clothes, “saw and believed” (John 20:5-8). He saw at once that something quite different occurred here from that which Mary Magdalene first suspected: there was no question of the Lord having been “taken away... out of the sepulchre” and Mary not knowing “where they have laid Him” (John 20:2). It was impossible to take the

buried Jesus from the winding sheet (which, according to the usage of the time, would have been soaked through with sticky substances and, most probably, all stuck together) without unwinding the linen clothes and tearing them apart in the process. It was, therefore, clear that the Lord departed from the grave into the resurrection of life and that the grave clothes could not restrict the transfigured flesh of the Risen Lord, Who became part of another world (John 5:28-29).



Our Saviour was empowered to be visible or invisible as He wished. The Lord could not only choose to whom He wished to appear but, if one may express it that way, controlled also the outwardness of His appearance. He accompanied Luke and Cleopas on a journey, conversed with them on the way, joined them at the evening meal, and suddenly vanished from their sight (Lk. 24:31). The transfigured Body of the Lord was free to pass through all material barriers. In general the glorified flesh of the Son of God was, from the earthly point of view, so materially refined, so free from the coarse material imperfections and limitations, to which we are accus-

tomed, that the Apostles thought “they had seen a spirit” (Lk. 24:37).

Contemplation of Christ’s Resurrection is only possible to our spiritual eyes of faith, free of everything that may obscure our sight. Our vision must be focused on the spiritual fountain of life rather than on material comfort. This is why our Church begins her Paschal Canon with the words: “Let us purify our senses (of all that is sinful, vain, corrupt) and we shall behold Christ (spiritually), radiant with the unapproachable light (to flesh and blood) of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say: Rejoice!...”

Descent Into Hades

According to Orthodox doctrine, the Descent of Christ into Hades was the final act of man’s Redemption. As the first Adam died in sin, the Second Adam (Christ) Who assumed the created nature had to reach the same depths to which the first man descended. Although no mention is made in the Gospels about this event, St. Peter speaks of it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:31) and in his epistle (I Peter 3:19): “He went and preached to those spirits that were in prison.” Also, the main theme throughout the Paschal hymnody is interwoven with the Lord’s Descent into Hades and His Resurrection in the flesh.

The icon of the Descent into Hades expresses the spiritual reality of the Resurrection and the results of His descent. The action in the icon takes place in Hades, shown as a gaping black abyss. In the center of the icon is the Saviour robed in white. He appears in Hades not as its captive but as its Conqueror, the Deliverer of the Old Testament prisoners; not as a slave but as the Mas-

ter of Life. He is depicted in the circle of the mandorla (symbol of God's power and glory) of various shades of blue, pierced with golden rays coming out from the Lord's body. The darkness of Hades is filled with the light of the coming Resurrection, the rays and dawn of Pascha. The Saviour stands on the two crossed leaves of Hades' doors. Below the doors, in the black abyss, is seen a chained figure of the prince of darkness, Satan, with fragments of broken chains, nails, keys, locks scattered all around. The Lord frees the souls of Adam and Eve along with the souls of all others who wait for His coming with faith. Christ is surrounded by two groups of Old Testament saints, one on either side of Him. To the left are King David and Solomon in royal robes and crowns with John the Forerunner; on the right is Moses, holding the book of law, and other prophets. Seeing the Saviour's presence in Hades, they immediately recognize Him, pointing Him out to others whose coming they foretold.

The Descent into Hades by Christ ends His degradation and marks the beginning of His glory. He opened to us access to Heaven. He laid the foundation of a new life for all those who have united themselves with Christ. The conquest of Hades is the sunrise of a new, reborn humanity. The Resurrection of Christ is a token of our own resurrection.

Myrrhbearing Women

Our Lord's return from among the dead is expressed in the icon of the Myrrhbearing Women in the same way the Gospels describe the event of His Resurrection. The Women witnessed an earthquake, saw the angel descended from Heaven who rolled the stone away from the entrance of the sepulchre, and saw the fear of the watchmen (Matt. 28:1-4).

According to the Gospel, the icon depicts the burial cave with an empty tomb where the linen cloth was lying. Usually, to the left of the tomb a group of women is standing and the angel in white garment sit-



ting on the rock, which he rolled away from the door, is on the right. The angel points to the empty tomb showing to the women that the

Lord is no longer there, that *He is Risen*. The narration in the Gospels differs as to the number of women and angels at the tomb. In the Gospel of St. Luke the number of women is not mentioned at all. This is why, in some icons, the number of women depicted may be five or more. In the same way, icons either show one angel according to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, or two, according to Luke and John, "one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid" (John 20:12). Generally, this Paschal icon is an exact reproduction of the Gospel stories, down to the smallest detail. Even the napkin, "that had been about His head" is depicted lying "apart" (John 20:7)

The Age to Come

The Lord's Resurrection took place in the morning after the seventh day (following the Sabbath). This was the beginning of the first day of the week. For this reason, the first day of the week is the day for celebration by all Christians commemorating the beginning of new life in Jesus Christ. The early Christians called this day the eighth day, or the eighth day of creation as it is now theologically known. It is not only to commemorate the day on which Christ arose but to celebrate the beginning and prefiguration of the eternal life with God to come for the renewed mankind. As the first day of creation was the beginning of days in time, so the day of the Resurrection of Christ is the beginning of days outside of time, that is, the fulfilment of our Lord's promise of the Kingdom to come, where God is *all in all*.

An Ordination in Concord

On the Feast of the Myrrhbearing Women, April 12/25, Andrew Snogren was ordained to the Diaconate at Holy Dormition of the Theotokos parish in Concord, NH.

Andrew (born Eric) in Michigan, is the son of Dorraine and Ruth Snogren. He grew up in a devout Evangelical home. His father was a Methodist minister, and Fr. Andrew felt called to follow in his footsteps. The year following his college graduation, during which he worked on the assembly line in a large Flint MI automotive plant, he married Alexandra. They headed east to Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, MA. Four years later, Andrew graduated with a Master's of Divinity from this conservative Protestant seminary.

He was ordained into the United Methodist Church and for eight years he pastored rural village churches in the west central part of New Hampshire. During these pleasant years the Lord blessed him and his wife with two beautiful girls, Krista and Hilarie.

Also during these years, he became increasingly disenchanted with the growing liberalism of the larger Methodist denomination, particularly in the debates about "God language." While he was feeling less at home with some of his colleagues, he, along with the rest of his family, began to be intro-

duced to Orthodoxy "in living color" through his brother Kyle's discovery and journey to the Church and tonsure into the monastic habit as Fr. Philaret at Holy Transfiguration Monastery. Though initially reacting to Orthodoxy like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, "Toto, we are not in Kansas anymore," over the years Andrew began to sense that here in Orthodoxy was something bigger than a



Deacon Andrew Snogren receives training from Archdeacon Andrew of Holy Transfiguration Monastery

movement, a denomination, a revered opinion. Through his own reading and exposure to Orthodoxy, lived and fleshed out particularly at the monastery, he eventually believed and confessed that here is the Way established by Christ, carried on and followed through the centuries; here is Truth about what it means to be a Christian—to worship, to repent, to grow in Christ; here is the Life to embrace and make one's own. Here in the Church was the good soil where the seeds and experiences

that his parents passed on were meant to take root and could flourish. Thankfully his wife shared his convictions and the whole family was received into the Church through Holy Baptism on October 15/28, 1989.

Since then they have been active in the Dormition parish, first under Fr. Theodore Stavru, and now under Fr. John Routos and Fr. Deacon Eugene Durkee. Andrew has been blessed to be in the choir for over ten years, and was tonsured a Reader. Having left the Protestant ministry, he has been able to continue in the helping profession by working as a home based counselor with a private agency for the last twelve years. He does intensive work in families' homes where the court is involved, either because of delinquent acts by young persons, or because of abuse or neglect by the parents. It is challenging and rewarding work. Alexandra is a registered nurse at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.

In spite of his many sins and shortcomings, God has called Andrew to serve the Church as a deacon. He wishes to express his sincere thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his parents, his family members, and especially his wife of 25 years, Alexandra, a very patient and forgiving spouse. His parish has been very supportive, and Fr. Andrew hopes for their continued patience and prayers.

May God and His All-holy Mother grant Fr. Andrew a fruitful diaconate.

Saint Xenia Orthodox Church Camp

by Athanasia Pilateris

Saint Xenia Orthodox Church Camp is a summer camp, one week in duration, for youth aged 8 to 16. This is the camp's 8th year in operation, and it serves families from all across the United States and Canada.

The camp is situated amongst the breath-taking White Mountains of Southwestern Maine, just outside the town of Fryeburg, in the midst of a spectacular evergreen forest. The serene location of the camp offers daily first-hand opportunities to study and revel in the beauty of nature, to breathe in deeply the cool, fresh air, and to feel thankful for the surroundings that offer beauty, peace and a sense of rejuvenation.

Children want to have fun at summer camp! St. Xenia Camp offers a well-planned program, which encourages children to broaden their experience and develop their skills and confidence in many areas. All the programs are delivered and supervised by camp leaders who are energetic, talented and committed. They include motivated college students, as well as experienced older individuals who have taken time off from their jobs as doctors, nurses, teachers, police, and others, to take part.

In the morning, the campers are awakened by the energetic sound of a melodic tune coming from a trumpet. Daily sports activities include aerobic fitness, soccer, football, tennis, softball, basketball, beach volleyball, as well as many team games in the infamous "Festivities on the Green" obstacle course. Water activities, which are

supervised by camp leaders as well as a nationally trained lifeguard, include swimming in the pool and canoeing on the serene and awe-inspiring Saco River, which is located at the foot of the campground. Hiking trips through the gorgeous evergreen forest enveloping the camp encourage the campers to observe and study nature. These walks lead to the naturally spectacular Emerald Pool and Rocky Gorge with tiny cascading waterfalls, which not even camp leaders can resist to go for a swim! Creative skills are developed through the use of drama, and a variety of arts and crafts activities, which enable campers to take a small memento of their camp experience home with them. Sitting around a campfire, roasting marshmallows, singing and talking provide nice closure to the day.

**St. Xenia Camp
August 15-21
needs qualified counselors**

For information
Phone: (207) 967-5830
Email:
mihailoff@adelphia.net

What makes St. Xenia Camp stand apart from other camps, however, is its ability to integrate these traditional fun camping experiences that children expect with a daily observance of spiritual matters. This is done in a way that not only maintains children's interest in and enjoyment of the camp type

activities, but also actually serves to enhance their experience. Spiritual exercises include a variety of Orthodox arts and crafts, children's stories, hymns, songs, prayers, learning to chant in traditional Byzantine style, chatting informally with visiting clergy, and participating in organized spiritual discussions. Church services are observed daily, with the opportunity to partake of Holy Communion. His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim, His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses, other visiting clergy and the camp priest grace the campers with inspirational fireside talks, as well as daily guidance and support. His Eminence, Metropolitan Makarios from Toronto supports these endeavors through his prayers and by procuring committed volunteers.

The camp experience takes place, in fact, during the Fast for the Dormition of the All Holy Theotokos. The talented cooks in the kitchen prepare such nutritious and delicious meals that the campers' appetites, which have been stimulated by the fresh air of nature, are nonetheless satiated. Children experience first-hand that fasting and paying attention to spiritual matters on a daily basis is the core of being; it is an integral part of day-to-day existence, and it adds to the other experiences of life. All camp leaders are models and mentors to the children, guiding them in their journey of integrating Orthodoxy within the challenges of their lives. Children leave the camp feeling that Orthodoxy is a Way of Life, and that they are

connected to other youth throughout North America who share in this revelation.

The dates for St. Xenia Orthodox Church Camp 2004 are August 15–21. If you are interested in volunteering, registering your children, or you would like some more information, please contact the Registrar, Presbytera Victoria Fleser at (617) 323-6379 or e-mail vikkif@homb.org before July 15.

St. Xenia Camp: a special place, where the memories of summer camp fun are reinforced by spiritual growth and strong friendships that last a lifetime. May the holy intercessions of St. Xenia continue to guide our efforts to show our children how to effectively integrate Orthodoxy within the demands and challenges of day-to-day life.



Metropolitan Moses visits some artistic campers and staff



A group shot of St. Xenia Camp 2003

On The Missions

My beloved Orthodox Christians:

In a number of ways, the past year has been discouraging for me, especially when considering our missionary endeavors in Africa. The defection of Father Anastasios Kihali and the unfaithfulness of Father Joachim Kyimba have grieved many of us, including our faithful in Africa. However, at the same time, in retrospect, it must be said that the departure of these priests abroad has also resulted in some very positive results for the clergy who remained faithful, as odd as it may seem. Our clergy there inform me now that, in fact, Father Joachim was a definite obstacle in promoting our missionary work in Uganda. For example, many good people were driven away by him. Then we learned that he would not distribute the catechetical materials we sent him; nor would he distribute the funds sent for the clergy for their parish needs. Instructions and advice from the Missionary Society and myself were essentially ignored. With his departure, however, some new parishes have already opened and, within two months, several hundreds have been baptized by Father Spyridon Kisomose. What has become apparent, in fact, at the present is that the Church in Uganda is in need of more qualified clergy. Although some of the candidates

proposed for ordination have had training at the new calendar theological academy in Nairobi, Kenya, it is evident that more instruction will be needed for them in several aspects of their formation as clergymen of our Church there.

Towards this end, the Benevolent Missionary Society of the Metropolis of Boston has been sending catechetical materials to



At St. Nicholas at Kanguulumira Parish Fr. Christopher Tamale donates exercise books to needy children

both Uganda and Kenya. This includes many publications of the Metropolis of Boston, as well as materials and literature from the Metropolis of Toronto and the Metropolis of Seattle.

All this is very helpful and very much needed. However, it fulfills only a small part of the needs required for well trained clergy and an educated flock in Africa. The Benevolent Missionary Society feels very strongly that it is necessary to bring one of the proposed candidates to the United States, to

Boston specifically, for six months to a year, if possible, in order to prepare the candidate as thoroughly as possible. Since, in addition, the aforementioned candidate wants to espouse the monastic life, the purpose of his visit to America will be twofold: to train him for the priesthood, and also to teach him the basics of the monastic life in order to enable him to establish, with the grace of God, a monastic center in East Africa. By training this one clergyman as well as we can, he, in turn, will be in a position to train others. Our efforts in this quarter will be assisted by Father Paul Njoroge of Kenya who was himself one of the instructors at the new calendar theological school in Nairobi and who has now joined us, together with two other clergy in Kenya.

As one African clergyman wrote, the Golden Age of the Orthodox Church in East Africa "was when the Church there was self-sufficient. The land for the churches, schools, assembly halls, etc. was donated by the people, people contributed their labour to build these churches and schools, the catechists were native Kenyans and Ugandans, the clergy were supported by the faithful, not so much by monetary payment, as by foodstuffs or donations of land so that the clergy and their families could labour to support themselves. In contrast, as soon as the [new calendar] Patriarchate of Alexandria stepped in with its

monthly stipends to the clergy, the whole system of voluntary, local support broke down, and the sins of ambition, greed, envy, vying for favors, and every other negative trait appeared," and, instead of pastors, the clergy turned into hirelings.

Recently, we wrote to our clergy in Kenya, "On our part, we have come to the conclusion that the Church—no matter where it is located on this planet—cannot go forward if it depends on a constant external source of welfare and subsidy.... The Church is strongest when it is self-sufficient. The Church may be smaller and poorer (at first), but its clergy and faithful will be stronger, more dedicated and more firm in their Orthodox Christian Faith. It will be a dynamic and more confident Church; it will be a Church of good and faithful stewards; it will be a Church of good shepherds, and not hirelings; it will be a Church of holy Apostles ready to lay down their very lives for our Saviour, and not a Church of Judas Iscariots ready to betray our Saviour for thirty pieces of silver; it will be a Church that worships and adores the living God, and not a Church that serves Mammon."

We were greatly heartened when our clergy in Kenya replied that they completely agreed with our sentiments! They have seen with their own eyes the corruption of the new calendar clergy in East Africa.

Nevertheless, the Missionary Society has a number of other needs: the cost of the catechetical materials that are sent overseas, the postage costs for sending them, holy vessels for the Divine Liturgy, travel expenses (roundtrip airline

tickets to and from East Africa are a little over \$1,000 per person) plus hotel expenses while there, vestments, liturgical books. In addition, we still have expenses for our domestic missions here in North America, although, for the most part, our local missions have now been supplied with the needed liturgical utensils, service books, and other items that are required for their orderly function.

From elsewhere, we have some encouraging news.

With a relatively small amount of funds from our Missionary Society in Boston, the clergy and faithful in the Republic of Georgia have produced a remarkable amount of literature, video-tapes and other catechetical materials for distribution in the Georgian language. Despite the violent persecution on the part of the ecumenistic Patriarchate of Georgia, and the official sanctions imposed by the government's "Concordat" with the Patriarchate, our clergy and faithful there have been steadfast in their confession of "the faith once delivered to the Saints." Special thanks are owed to our Monastery and Convent in Brookline, for they also have greatly assisted the Church, both there and in Russia, with considerable financial and moral support.

Our faithful continue to send donations which, at present, are being held in a special fund while we seek more effective ways to provide for the needs of the Ugandan orphans. Our hope is to gather all these children under the roof of an Orthodox orphanage. Please pray very earnestly that we can make the needed arrangements for this project.

In light of all the foregoing, the

Benevolent Missionary Society suggests the following: We ask of all the parishes to set aside one Sunday a year that will be dedicated to the Missions. We suggest that a banquet be held on this "MISSION SUNDAY". The proceeds of this event should be forwarded to the Benevolent Missionary Society at the following address:

Benevolent Missionary Society
1476 Centre Street
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417

Thank you for your assistance to date. The Benevolent Missionary Society and I thank you, as do the Christians abroad, for your consideration and love.

In Christ,
Metropolitan Ephraim

P.S. Although, because of my illness, I cannot travel to Africa at present, we still have to try to bring over one or two candidates for training. This will cost money. In addition, obtaining a visa to America for a young, single, able-bodied Ugandan or Kenyan is next to impossible, especially after 9/11. So we need your fervent prayers also!!



Christmas Day at St. Nectarios Kampala Parish

Missionary Society News

The Missionary Society continues to meet monthly under the direction of Metropolitan Ephraim. The faithful in Uganda have gone through many trials and tribulations during the past year, but their determination and faith have helped them come through stronger than ever.

The growth of the Church in Uganda means there is a need for more clergy and qualified teachers who can teach the faith. While we

hope it will be possible to bring one candidate to the U.S. for training, it is apparent that much more needs to be done in the short term. To this end, Father Spyridon Kisomose recently held a short conference in Kampala attended by those who are candidates for ordination or who will become catechists.

Metropolitan Ephraim has traveled to Uganda twice in recent years. This year Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto and Hiero-

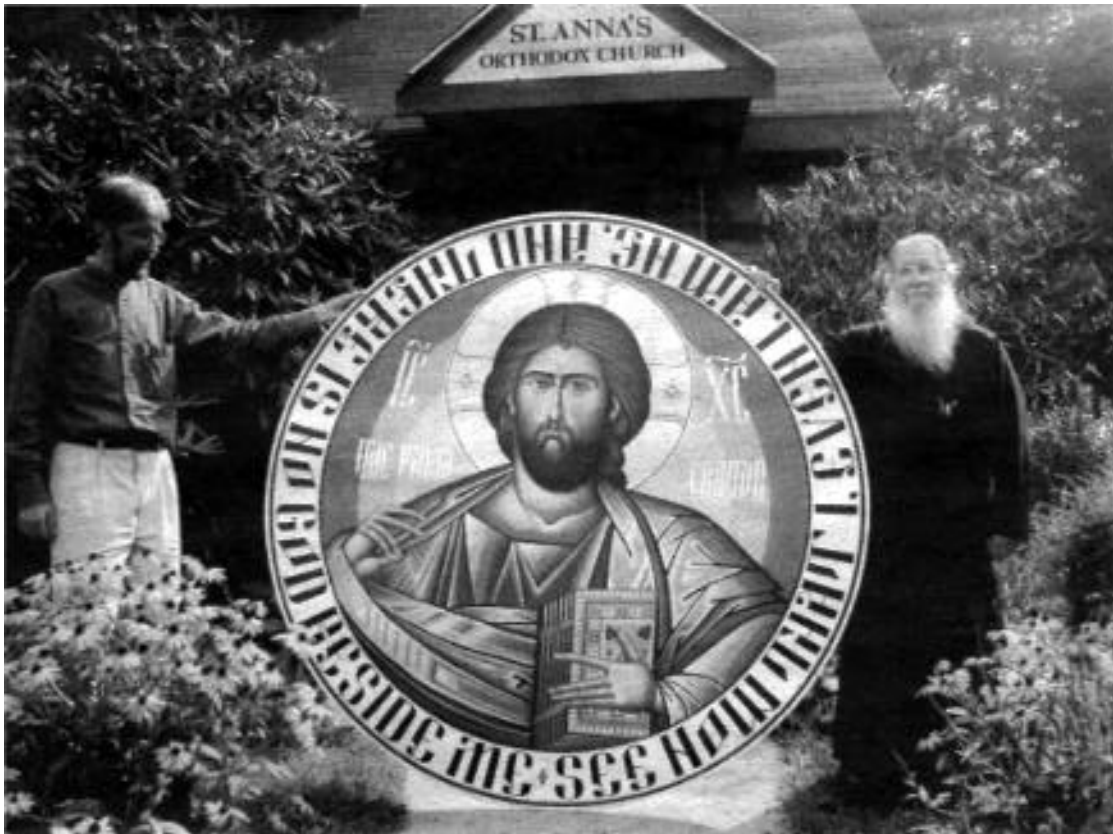
deacon Barsanuphius of Holy Transfiguration Monastery will go to Uganda at the end of April. At least one lay member of the Missionary Society will also make the trip.

The Society thanks all those who continue to support this important work of the Church. We pray that our Lord will continue to bless you.



*Fr. Spyridon Kisomose and Fr. Deacon Christopher Kyagulanyi
with those who attended the recent conference in Kampala.
The attendees are candidates for ordination or
are to become catechists.*

New Icon for St. Anna's



Pictured in the photograph are Father John Fleser, parish priest, and Andrij Maday, iconographer, standing with the icon of the Pantocrator that was installed in the ceiling of St. Anna's Church on August 23, 2003. Andrij resides in Cleveland, OH: Maday Studios, P.O. Box 33315, Cleveland, OH 44133-3315. He flew out to help with the mounting and installation of the icon. St. Anna's Church is located at 852 South Street, Roslindale, MA 02131-2448.

STEFANA
by Alexandra
Wedding Crowns
and Crown Cases

Website:
www.jpdesignjp.com
Phone: (617) 524-0351

Email:
jpdesign16@aol.com
Fax (617) 522-6163



Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church

Pomona, California

Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church is a parish established “to proclaim, pure and undefiled, the Orthodox Christian Faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship, disciplines, usage and customs of the Orthodox Christian Church including adherence to the traditional Orthodox (Julian) Calendar”—*By-Laws Part 1, Section 2*. Our parish is under the jurisdiction of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, which is affiliated with the True Orthodox Church of Greece, also following the traditional ecclesiastical calendar of the Orthodox Church (commonly known as the “Old” or “Julian” calendar). Our bishop is His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses and our priest is Father Nicholas Liberis.

The Church serves the local residents of Pomona, California, its neighboring cities as well as those as far East as Riverside, San Bernardino and the Desert, San Diego to the South, the coastal cities and Los Angeles area to the West and families up to Bakersfield in the North. Our congregation includes a variety of nationalities, as is typical of the landscape of Southern California. Services are held in both Greek and English, using traditional Byzantine hymns and chant. Sunday school is also provided for our youth and is taught by many kind and professional teachers.

Background

In the winter of 1981, Father Nicholas Liberis announced to the Greek Archdiocese parish of Saint Anthony in Pasadena, California, that he could no longer serve under

clear conscience could not support the unholy decisions and actions that had been made. As a result, Father Nicholas left the Greek Archdiocese jurisdiction.

Father Nicholas petitioned and was accepted by Archbishop

Anthony and Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory, of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) who, at the time, represented one of the few remaining traditional Orthodox Christian jurisdictions. Father began holding services at his home with just a handful of parishioners who also sought to worship



the leadership of the Greek Archdiocese because of its involvement in ecumenism and other non-Orthodox practices. This was not an easy decision for a priest who was nurtured, ordained (Holy Cross Seminary 1966), and served faithfully in the Greek Archdiocese which provided him and his family with a generous income. Yet, when confronted with the command to serve with several non-orthodox clergy, which is in violation of the Church’s Holy Canons, Father Nicholas refused and denounced the unholy order. Although Father was tempted by the leadership of the Greek Archdiocese and many of its clergy to remain loyal, he in

and celebrate the confession of faith as instructed by the Holy Fathers. Soon a number of Greek families who were “Old Calendarists” from Greece, and had not joined the Archdiocese upon arriving in the United States, heard of the Greek priest that was now serving according to the Orthodox tradition that they had upheld. They rejoiced, since they were now able to partake in confession, communion and the other Holy Mysteries, which for many years were only available at the Russian Churches. Within a few weeks Father’s house was filled with new faces, in addition to those who also left the Archdiocese, piously attending Church services with fervor and

zeal for the Holy Faith.

Archbishop Anthony then granted Father Nicholas the use of the then vacant church of Saint Andrew's in Glendora, California. Russian Orthodox immigrants who had fled persecution under Communism in order to preserve their faith had founded the old church decades ago; but as time passed the original patrons had passed on or moved away, leaving the church vacant. Father Nicholas and his followers rejoiced at this generous gift, which had an ample lot with a hall and classrooms. For the next four years the parish flourished as Greeks, Russians and converts of diverse nationalities gave praise and worship to Christ our God according to the true Orthodox tradition. But, as the evil of this world does not rest, the availability of the old church would not last.

In November 1985 Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory reposed. With the ascent of Archbishop Vitaly of Montreal to the position of First Hierarch of the ROCOR, a new, more liberal church policy, contrary to Metropolitan Philaret's, was inaugurated and led to a separation from the ROCOR of several monasteries and parishes in the United States, Canada, and France, including Saint Nectarios of Seattle (Saint Nectarios Press) as well as our parish of Saint Andrew. This group protested the reports of nearly 20 concelebrations of ROCOR clergy with ecumenist clergy of the "canonical" jurisdictions. The fact that the Synod repeatedly ignored these ecumenist actions convinced us that the Russian Synodal bishops would not reprimand those guilty. The protesting clergy then petitioned two Greek

hierarchs, Metropolitan Gabriel and Metropolitan Akakios, who were inactive members of Archbishop Auxentius' Synod, to be received by them. They did accept us in December, 1986. In July, 1987, we chose to go directly under Archbishop Auxentius, since he was the First Hierarch of the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church in Greece. He received us most graciously. The following year Father Ephraim of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Massachusetts, was ordained to the episcopate as Bishop of Boston and our parish became under his jurisdiction. Since the Synod of ROCOR owned the property, and we no longer recognized their authority, we were asked to leave the Church of Saint Andrew.



Metropolitan Makarios assisting at the ordination of Deacon Michael Whipple (2001)

During the next few years the faithful celebrated services at various houses of its parishioners while searching for property to build a church. The task of determining where to build the church was not easy as the parishioners were spread across a large area of Southern California. High property prices and zoning regulations were also a hindrance in finding a central yet suitable location. The parishioners prayed to Saints Demetrios and Phanourios to help them find a place to build their church. By the grace of God a lot was found in Pomona, California and, with the generous donations and loans of parishioners and friends, this property was purchased in 1990 and building began. Saint Demetrios was chosen as the

patron of our parish to pay tribute to the defender of the faith that he may pray on our behalf for God's love, guidance and mercy.

Years later, the humble Church of Saint Demetrios, having struggled through divisive factions and financial setbacks, survives by the Grace of God and the faithful zeal of its members. The Icon Screen (Iconostasis) was hand carved by one of our members and the Icons which adorn it are hand painted by the nuns of Holy Nativity Convent in Brookline, Massachusetts. A nun of our parish looks after the grounds of our Church and heads our philanthropic endeavors. As many of the elderly parishioners pass on, their children and grandchildren, together with our new members, continue their steadfast faith.

Mother Thecla Becomes Abbess

On February 3/16, 2004, the Feast of Saints Symeon and Anna, the Patron Saints of the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord, Mother Thecla was installed as Abbess of the small community in Stanwood, WA, by Archimandrite Panteleimon of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA.

We urge you to remember the small, struggling community in your prayers, as many challenges lay ahead of them, including needing eventually to relocate, and being extremely short-handed. As they attempt to support themselves through their cottage industry of making 100% pure beeswax tealights and votives, you can also help by ordering their products.



**Convent of the
Meeting of the Lord**
29206 64th Ave NW
Stanwood, WA 98292

Phone: (360) 629-0285

Fax: (360) 629-6065

Email: symeon@mindspring.com

For online ordering: www.stnectoriospress.com

HOW TO PUT *THE FAITHFUL STEWARD* IN YOUR WILL

After providing for their families, loved ones, and diocesan/parish organizations, subscribers may want to put *The Faithful Steward* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this publication. Bequests are free of estate tax, and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government. You can give needed support for *The Faithful Steward* by simply including the following words in your will:

I give, devise, and bequeath to the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston, Inc., 1476 Centre Street, Roslindale, Massachusetts 02131-1417 _____ (amount) to be used to support the ministry of *The Faithful Steward*.

A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name *The Faithful Steward* as a contingency beneficiary in the event that someone named in your will is no longer living.

It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

The Christian's Attitude Towards His Passions

By Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov
(*Ascetical Essays*, Part V)

If we men are aware of the fact that in the prolonged and laborious course of spiritual contest there inevitably will occur both victories and defeats and that it is impossible for our limitations, weaknesses and sinfulness not to come to the fore, then so much more does God our Creator, the Setter of our contest, know this very thing. He regards the stumblings of his ascetic with mercy, and in return for his unflinching constancy and faithfulness, He prepares for him the crown of righteousness, victory and glory.

How desirable is purity of heart and body! It is by this means that God is seen (Mt 5:8). This purity is acquired by a continuous and most laborious struggle against impurity. In order to enter upon the struggle against impurity it is necessary for it to be revealed before the gaze of our mind. It is revealed by thoughts, phantasies, and the sensations of the flesh. He that has never done battle against impurity and who therefore does not know what impurity is, considers himself chaste. He is in the most dangerous form of self-deception and capable of being taken by surprise and suddenly cast into the abyss of deadly sins. Impurity is the inevitable possession of fallen nature, whereas purity is a gift of God's grace, drawn to a person when he labours correctly towards purifying himself.

There is a very great difference between sinning intentionally with a disposition towards sin, and sinning through allurements by sin and out of weakness with a disposition

to please God. There is a very great difference between leading a sinful life, that is, leading a life which gratifies one's every desire and passion, and stumbling by reason of one's weakness, limitations, or being wounded by sin while travelling along the path of God.

Premature passionlessness is dangerous! Perilous also is the premature reception of delight on account of Divine grace. Supernatural gifts are able to bring perdition

Let us bring to mind the saying of the Fathers who were well acquainted and experienced with this battle:
Give blood and receive the Spirit.

to the ascetic who has not yet come to know well his infirmity by means of his falls, who is unexperienced in life, untried in the battle with sinful thoughts, and has not become well-acquainted with the craftiness and wickedness of the demons as well as with the fickleness of human nature.

Man is free to choose the evil or the good. Even though a man be a vessel of Divine grace, he is still able to misuse the very grace of God. By reason of it he may exalt himself over his neighbours; again, on account of it he may fall into putting his hope in himself. The result of hoping in oneself is usu-

ally carelessness, laxity in struggling and the abandonment of struggle. As a result of this heedlessness, the desires of the flesh suddenly and furiously rise up in the soul and body of the sanctified. They draw them away like a tempestuous current, cast them into the abyss of impure carnal stumblings, and often bring them to utter death of soul.

God, Who loves man, and *Who desireth that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (I Tim 2:1) allowed His servants, His beloved, during the entire time of their earthly sojourn to wage battle by means of outward and inward afflictions. The battle with the passions, and the afflictions which result therefrom are incomparably more burdensome than all temptations coming from without. The fatigue and struggle which the Christian experiences on account of this unseen inner battle is equal in significance to the contest of the martyrs. Let us bring to mind the saying of the Fathers who were well acquainted and experienced with this battle: *Give blood and receive the Spirit*. It is only the diligent fulfillers of the Gospel, only the true followers of Christ that bear the yoke of such a struggle. "The fulfilment of the commandments teaches a man his infirmities" said Saint Symeon (Chapters on theology and the active life, Ch. 4 *Philokalia, Part I*). The entire structure of salvation is constructed upon the knowledge and recognition of one's infirmity.

Concluded in next issue



About Our Logo
A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

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The Faithful Steward
1476 Centre Street
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417

THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward*, although delivered free of charge to all members of our Church, is in need of your support.



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