



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 Consecration of Bishop Sergios

By The Honorable Leonid Ponomarchuk and Father Simon

Bishop Sergios was born in 1942 in Connecticut and was raised in a small rural town. He spent his summers and holidays in an even smaller and more rural town in northern Vermont with his grandmother, who had a great influence on his boyhood formation.

Bishop Sergios graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1964 with a BA in Philosophy and went on to attend St. Vladimir's Seminary, graduating in 1967. In 1968 he graduated from Fordham University with an MA in Byzantine Studies, and in May, 1969 was ordained priest in the Diocese of Sitka, Alaska, where he served until August, 1972. There he joined the history faculty of the Sitka branch of the University of Alaska.

In 1972, with the departure of his ordaining Bishop from Alaska, Bishop Sergios spent a year's sabbatical leave at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Monastery in Essex, England. In 1976, he spent a second sabbatical year at Simonos Petras Monastery on the Holy Mountain. In

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*Bishop Sergios
Consecrated on July 26/August 8, 2004*

Elevation of Abbess Nectaria



Abbess Nectaria with Archpriest George Kochergin, Archimandrite Panteleimon, Metropolitan Makarios, Abbess Seraphima, Archpriest Panagiotes Carras, and Hierodeacon Demetrius

On April 5/18, 2004, Thomas Sunday, many of the faithful of the Toronto parishes, along with many out-of-town guests, attended the Divine Liturgy at the Convent of the Dormition of the Theotokos. They all flocked there with great joy to pray for Mother Nectaria and her synodia, during the elevation of Mother Nectaria to the office of abbess. Elder Fr. Panteleimon, Fr. George Kochergin, Hierodeacon Demetrius, Fr. George and Abbess Seraphima along with three mothers from Holy Nativity Convent all came to Stouffville for this blessed occasion. The chapel and all the surrounding rooms were filled to capacity. The voices of all were united in the proclamation of *Axia* (worthy), as if in one voice all responded to Metropolitan Makarios' proclamation. This was an outpouring of gratitude to the Lord, Who has showered the faithful of our city with so many blessings.

In May, 2001, four mothers from the Holy Nativity Convent in Brookline were sent to the newly acquired Stouffville Convent. All the mothers were former parishioners of the St. Nektarios Parish and the return of these mothers was seen by all as the blessings of Abraham: *May you see your children's children, round about your table.* In this case, *the Holy Table.*

The founding of the convent was accompanied with the great blessing of unanimity as our community entered a new plateau in its history. The clergy of Toronto were especially thankful because our Saviour granted us the joy of seeing the harvest of our labours in our children. Truly the blessings of Abraham.

Abbess Nectaria, as a child, was one of many children from Toronto to make frequent pilgrimages to our monastic communities in Brookline. The bond was enhanced by Elder Panteleimon's and Abbess Stephania's frequent visits to Toronto. As soon as Mother Nectaria graduated from high school, she became a novice at Holy Nativity Convent, where she remained for twenty years. This was the beginning of the long line of women that left for Holy Nativity—all in all, seven from Toronto and two from Buffalo. As the community of Greater Toronto grew, the love for our monastic communities also grew along with a strong wish that we too could be blessed by having a monastic community in our midst. This desire was fulfilled in May, 2001.

Today we all feel that our Saviour has looked down upon our sinful existence and mercifully granted us Mother Nectaria and her synodia as a joy and a blessing. May our Lord shelter and guide them.

Pastoral Visit to Kenya

By Hierodeacon Barsanuphius

Metropolitan Makarios and I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya on the morning of April 29 with a good measure of fatigue, given the fact we had been up for some 30 hours, nineteen of which was travel time. There was also some measure of natural trepidation, wondering what we would find in the parishes. Fr. Paul and Fr. Barnabas, the two priests in Kenya, met us at the airport with a joyful and warm welcome, and took us to the 680 Hotel. They had been received into the Holy Orthodox Church in North America in February 2003 in Uganda, during Metropolitan Ephraim's visitation. As a result, Fr. Paul was dismissed from his professorship in Nairobi's Orthodox seminary, where he had been teaching pastoral theology. He taught Fr. Barnabas, age 37, as well as some of our Ugandan clergy.

After resting and eating lunch, we set out for Vespers at St. John of Kronstadt parish in Mutamaiyu (meaning olive tree), some 20 miles away. On the way there we stopped at Fr. Paul's parish of St. Philaret the Almsgiver, which rents space in a small country school. Three widely spaced clay brick buildings create a large central green; the setting is in the midst of rolling farmland, a very beautiful spot. The next morning was to be our first hierarchical liturgy. One of the classrooms is rented to serve as the church for services.

We continued on to St. John of

Kronstadt parish, to find some sixty to seventy people waiting to greet us with great warmth, chanting, rhythmic clapping, and spiritual songs of welcome. With such a greeting our feelings of trepidation rapidly began to dissipate. The small church building, perhaps 20' x 35', is of the most temporary construction; corrugated iron on three sides and roof, open on the west entrance. Inside, there is a



Father Paul, Metropolitan Makarios and the elder Nahashion in front of St. John of Kronstadt Church, Mutamaiyu, Kenya

large holy table, proskomide table on the left, and a table for vesting on the right. The church does not have an iconostasis, but laminated icons from Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, MA are pinned to the walls. Despite the physical limitations, the atmosphere was one of much spiritual warmth.

Following Vespers, Fr. Paul greeted the Metropolitan on behalf of the parish, and introduced various parish leaders, including the elder Nahashion, age 84. The elder spoke in his Kikuyu language, with

Fr. Paul translating.

"Since the seventies, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, seeing the growth of the churches in Kenya, established a Greek episcopate with a basically Greek administration, thus securing the church properties and incomes in the name of the Patriarchate. While still educating and ordaining native priests, the Patriarchate would not allow any native administration, despite

the fact that all that had been built was with our own contributions. When the Patriarchate took over properties and administration, it also cut off the local support of the parish clergy and their families, supplanting it with stipends from the Patriarchate. This move allowed two means of added control over the local church; first, the incomes of the parishes could be collected by the Patriarchate inasmuch as this income was

to be used in part for the stipends of the clergy, and secondly, the clergy's loyalty to the Patriarchate and its policies could be assured. Because of this, as well as other matters of the Faith, such as ecumenism, we have felt betrayed. So, we have been praying and looking for a good shepherd, and now I hope, your Eminence, that we have found one, that you are a good shepherd and not a bad shepherd. For surely, our Saviour Jesus Christ will come in His judgment, and you will have to answer to Him for your actions as His shepherd."

At this point Metropolitan Makarios began shedding tears. He bowed deeply to elder Nahashion, approached him, and exchanged the paschal kiss thrice. Having been deeply moved by the elder, his clear-headedness, his practicality, and his great zeal for the holy Faith, the Metropolitan reassured the elder in the presence of the whole congregation that we all believe in the same way, that we too have endured betrayals, and that we should thank our Saviour for having brought us together. He then promised to do all we can to help the parish and to find a suitable priest. He also promised the parish an hierarchical liturgy on Tuesday, the day of our leaving Kenya for Uganda. The people received this news with great joy. The elder concluded his address thanking the Metropolitan with great warmth for his visitation and reassurance in the Faith.

The next morning I became very nervous at the outset of Liturgy in St. Philaret's parish. It was the first time I had served alone with the Metropolitan, and I was unsure what to expect. There were eighteen of us in all. The whole Liturgy was conducted in Swahili, except for our parts in English. It was not a smoothly run Liturgy. Everyone was trying to keep track of the order of service. The Kenyans were wondering how we wanted to do things. We were wondering when our next cue was coming up. I was just wondering.

After the Liturgy, we all retired

to the trapeza where we were served bread, rice, a mixture of cooked veggies, potatoes, and coffee. Then a lively, very good-natured discussion took place with many questions and ideas about parish life directed to the Metropolitan. One question concerned the historical roles of men and women in the church. The Metropolitan liked this question very much, as it gave him an excellent opportunity to stress the crucial importance of the difference in roles. Among other things, he said



Parishioners in front of St. Philaret the Almsgiver Orthodox Church in Githunguri, Kenya

that “the difference in tasks for men and women is from God, each having their own social responsibilities, rather than either one being more meritorious than the other, as anyone can see. As for the priesthood, we follow what the Apostles received from our Saviour.” (I was anxiously awaiting the best opportunity to quietly add my 8 or 9 brief comments, but with great dismay saw each one covered far more completely by the Metropolitan — O well!)

The Metropolitan then complimented the women on their very good tasting fasting dishes. I am

not sure they were thinking of these as being particularly fasting, as this is what most people eat most of the time. Nevertheless, if they would submit their recipes, he would create a little Lenten recipe book and send them the proceeds.

Aha! Now was my opportunity to advertise my project of making prayer ropes to help raise funds for the parishes. After a brief 20-minute review of the history of the Jesus Prayer, prayer rope making and the benefits thereof, all were greatly enthused, despite one or two yawns.

Next, a man named Amos presented himself for reinstatement into the Church. He had been baptized in 1967, but had become discouraged by the activities of the Patriarchate in the 70's and had lapsed. Fr. Paul and the faithful were very joyful at his desire to return.

After a brief return to Nairobi to change our flight time to Uganda, due to the morning Liturgy now scheduled for Tuesday, we set out for the city of Nyeri, some 80 or so miles away. On the way, as evening was drawing nigh, we stopped to see Fr. Barnabas' Church of St. Nektarios, in the village where he lives. The church occupies a small rented room, actually a store in a building of various stores. As we pulled into the area, a most unpleasant scene presented itself. On a makeshift stage two evangelical preachers were coarsely shouting into an obnoxiously loud loudspeaker, the one blaring in English, the other translating into Kikuyu, with an electronic organ accompanying them. Fr. Barnabas opened the church so that we might see it, venerate the icons and receive a bless-

ing from the Metropolitan. Some twenty or thirty children gathered and squealed with joy as I took flash digital pictures both inside and out in the gathering darkness. They especially liked seeing their image on the tiny camera screen after each shot. Arriving at the Green Hills, a three-star hotel in Nyeri, we all settled in and ate a late supper.

We arose the next morning and prepared for a meeting in the hotel with six catechists of St. Nektarios Church. The Metropolitan spoke to them about the moral and spiritual responsibilities of teachers, choir leaders, catechists, and especially those desiring to serve the Church as clergy. All six aspire to ordination. All have long histories on the chanting stand and know the services very well. One of the most fundamental issues is the canonical rule of virginity, that both husband and wife must be virgins prior to marriage in order for a man to qualify for ordination. All six qualify. Could we find the same level of commitment elsewhere?

On Saturday morning we celebrated a Liturgy in St. Nektarios Church. At the end of the Liturgy Metropolitan Makarios was asked to address the question of the new calendar vs. the old. He gave a most enlightening and inspiring account of the history and real issues involved, rather than the 13-day difference. He then preached on the Holy Gospel for the day, saying, “We need not fear being small, in

the minority, laughed at, ‘spat upon’, as it were, like our Saviour was spat upon; for He loves us. He has created us to be saved; all are called to become saints. We are His ‘little flock’, we keep His commandments because we love Him and He gives us much grace, many grace-gifts to endure the crosses that come our way.”

Next the church school entertained us with several songs. Two of them were composed by the elder Nahashion. Everyone chanted these to the impeccable rhythm of a drum, played by two 10-year-olds, first a girl, then a boy. The congregation was then addressed by the head of the women's organization, a very intelligent and articulate person. She reported on the successes



Fr. Barnabas translates the Metropolitan's address at St. Nektarios

and struggles of the parish and the church school, noting in particular the scant educational resources. The elder Peter, the oldest member of the community, in his mid eighties, addressed us next. He too spoke very clearly and seriously, exhorting all to remain faithful to the traditions of the Church. He then invited everyone to his farm home where he entertained us for

two hours while the women of the parish prepared lunch for all. He continued recounting incidents from his life in the Church, remarking on themes of the rule of the Patriarchate which were now becoming familiar to us. Fr. Barnabas' presbytera directed the cooking and serving of the meal, together with his five excited children. All the children of the parish seemed to be present. It had just rained, so that the thick red clay soil was extremely slippery and sticky. This made coming down and going back up a very steep bank with scant clay stairs cut into it most exciting. We returned to the hotel. Most unfortunately, due to the shortness of funds on our part, we were unable to put up Fr. Paul in the hotel, so that he was forced to stay with Fr. Barnabas in very cramped conditions.

An hierarchical Liturgy was held in St. Nektarios Church on Sunday morning and I felt slightly more comfortable serving. It seemed that the whole parish and then some were in attendance, because there was standing room only, both inside and out of doors. At the end of the Liturgy, the parish was addressed by Lucy, the head of the parish committee. She detailed some of the more important needs of the parish: to relocate and enlarge the church; to provide transportation not only for the priest and his family, but also for the sick and elderly; to acquire church school materials covering the lives of the saints, church history and the services; to obtain scholarships for children beyond the sixth grade. Lucy then extended a most warm invitation for lunch at Fr. Barnabas' home for the whole parish, and ended addressing the

Metropolitan, “Come frequently, go safely, and we pray for you.”

Fr. Barnabas’ living quarters comprise three rooms rented in a one story apartment house made of clay. There is a living/bedroom for him and his presbytera, a bedroom for the children, and a kitchen. Both he and Fr. Paul gave up virtually everything to join our synod; income, housing, car etc. Their parishes are too small and poor to support them. They are reluctant to seek any other means of support since they are committed to spending as much time as possible for the building up of the parishes, seeing this ground work as being the foundation for the establishment of economic security and the future expansion of the Church. Consequently, our diocesan Missionary Society has undertaken a partial stipend for them to help with

necessities. But all is woefully inadequate. Fr. Barnabas very much feels the pressure to relocate both the church as well as his own family, since his apartment is crumbling physically, and is far too small for their needs.

We sat for lunch in Fr. Barnabas’ living/bedroom, his bed having been curtained off, yet still allowing four guests to sit along its edge. One of the guests was the local new calendar priest, age 57, who has been a close friend of Fr. Barnabas for many years. His parish has a congregation of some 1,000 members. Apparently he would have been one of the 20 or so priests to have joined our synod a year ago had we been able and willing to pick up their stipends. The example of Fathers Paul and Barnabas leaving everything behind in the way of support has been quite a witness to

this man. He had joined us in church toward the end of the Liturgy. The luncheon and day ended on a very positive note, all enthusiastically coming to receive the Metropolitan’s blessing as we left, pleading for him to return soon, and thanking him most profoundly for his visit.

Since there was no scheduled Liturgy on Monday morning, we were met at the hotel by Frs. Paul and Barnabas, a few parishioners, and our bus driver, James who was in his fifties and would soon prove to be indomitable.

We headed for Maasai country, a large plain extending into Uganda, chiefly inhabited by the ancient Maasai tribe. On the way we stopped in the village of Nanyuki to pick up the elder Solomon, aged 97. He owns 10 acres of land on the plain, and had

invited us out to see it because he intends to establish a parish church there. He is also an amazing man, all white haired and completely bent over like St. Seraphim. He walks having his hands and cane behind his back much of the time. We drove out onto the plain for over an hour, and soon came to the place in the road where James was to distinguish himself. There was a mud bog due to heavy rain the night before. At a point where the road seemed to end, a heavyset woman and her helper were struggling with a fence. James made a deal with her to allow him, for a modest sum, to drive on her land so we could continue to the village. She and her helper moved the fence. For the next three hundred hair-raising yards, the bus wildly lurched from side to side, scraping bottom the whole way but never stopping. We made it! Now all we had to do was to get back through it again on the return trip, which we did and gladly paid her. She said she was a Baptist.

Finally arriving at the largely Maasai village named Mutirithia, Fr. Paul explained that there were well over a hundred Orthodox Christians living there who had become disenchanted with the Patriarchate, which is why the elder Solomon was eager to establish a parish there. The road ended, we all disembarked, and began walking toward a country school. Many children in their early teens, dressed in school uniforms warmly greeted us. Their teacher explained that he is Roman Catholic, and that if we could send him any mate-

rials on the history of the Church and the lives of Saints, he would teach this material in the school.

He accompanied us as we continued on for over a mile to the elder Solomon’s property. As we proceeded at a leisurely pace, due to the elder’s slow but determined gait, we came upon several herds of sheep and goats, tended by their Orthodox owners. Nearing his land, we met Joseph, a grandson of the elder, with his wife and family. Fr. Paul is hoping to have Joseph ordained priest for the parish there. Next we came upon three small clay houses, one owned by the elder Solomon’s granddaughter and her family, another is his, and the third also belongs to the family.

The elder assembled us in front of his own house, chairs and a sofa were brought from the other two

that had hurt him. He told of the parishes he had helped establish and to which he had belonged. Then he charged the Metropolitan with the responsibility of bringing the true and holy Orthodox Faith to them. “We have all suffered very much from the betrayals of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. We are the church of the remnants, all of these people here, abandoned by Alexandria, are now found again by our Saviour. Now that there is a local Brotherhood,” referring to Fr. Paul’s legally established corporation, “with a completely indigenous organization and clergy, all the people are very encouraged.” He also said how moved and grateful he and his family are by the Metropolitan’s assurances that all is as he hopes with us, and that our goals in establishing an indigenous church will be fulfilled. He then said with deep conviction, “I have always wanted to found a church. If I am able to found this church here, I hope that I would be commemorated before God both here and in Toronto as a founder of the Church, and that our Saviour will receive me into His Kingdom as such.” He continued saying that he hoped our Saviour would number him among His Saints for his confession of the Faith, his understanding of it, and his clinging to it all his life. And now as fruits of this, there is this opportunity of the founding of a church here, in the midst of his own family and with a grandson able to be priest, who himself has kept the Faith.

At this the Metropolitan was again moved to tears. He stood up and said to him, “I assure you that this is true. You know, throughout



Fr. Barnabas and family in front of their home



The elder Solomon (seated) hosting a meeting with Metropolitan Makarios to establish a parish

houses, and the Metropolitan, the other clergy and I were asked to be seated for the meeting. The elder Solomon was also seated, and began speaking, Fr. Paul interpreting. He began recounting his own long history in the Church, the things that had inspired him in the Holy Faith, and then the betrayals

the history of the Church, the founders of churches and monasteries have always been especially beloved by our Saviour, and been diligently remembered by the churches and monasteries they have founded. We will always remember you in the diptychs in my diocese of Toronto, and you will always be remembered here too, of course.” Then the elder said loudly and clearly, “I own ten acres of land here. I now donate one acre of it to the establishment and building of a parish church, and as much more as will be needed by it. I hope that God will accept this offering and establish a church here.” Fr. Paul then said that Fr. Barnabas

would be the interim parish priest until one could be provided, and will immediately begin forming a community. Continuing, he pointed toward the elder’s granddaughter and said that he hoped to build a temporary building immediately, and that by July they would be able to have a Holy Water service and their first Liturgy, and to baptize her five children, as the first offerings of the parish. The meeting ended with prayers of thanksgiving, the chanting of hymns, and the Metropolitan’s blessing. The Metropolitan again vowed his assistance in any possible way.

Fr. Paul further commented that of the some 250 students in the school, it is possible that over 100 of them will become Orthodox once the parish is established, due to the substantial number of formerly new calendar Orthodox people in the village and area. These families have been waiting for the true Orthodox Church to arrive.

We had noticed on arriving that many of the children from the school greeted us making the sign of the Cross on themselves Orthodox style, and greatly desired the icons I handed them, kissing them as they received them.

This was certainly one of the most inspirational and beautiful days of the trip. Somehow making it back through the giant quagmire, we packed up everything at the hotel and returned to Nairobi. Due to a monumental traffic jam, we arrived late, exhausted, famished, and made it to the dining room just as it was closing. Our last supper in Kenya was a relatively scant fasting meal.



Elder Nahashion's final address to Metropolitan Makarios

Tuesday morning we woke early and prepared for departure, first to the promised hierarchical Liturgy at St. John of Kronstadt Church, then to the airport and Uganda in the evening. The people were very joyful throughout the Liturgy, everyone chanting everything with the choir, as usual, and most enthusiastically. At its conclusion, the elder Nahashion again addressed the Metropolitan, reminding him of his duty to be a good shepherd

in the context of the true Orthodox Faith, and not a betrayer, for which he will answer in the Judgment. We again were invited to his home for lunch. A few members of the congregation accompanied us. Also, three Matthewites who were investigating us, one a monk, all three well educated. They had originally been with the Patriarchate, then disillusioned went to the Matthewites, now disillusioned again due to the “Holy Trinity Icon” and other problematical issues are again looking. They spoke to the Metropolitan, asking him various questions. We gave them a ride to their monastery on the way to the airport. Parting from the people of St. John of Kronstadt Church was very deeply heartfelt for everyone. They pleaded with the Metropolitan to return in February, if possible, for the purpose of ordaining several more priests, and helping them to set good order in all things for their Brotherhood.

At the airport, for an hour or so the Metropolitan had an excellent opportunity to review certain administrative documents and forms with Frs. Paul and Barnabas, specifically dealing, in one instance, with applications for ordination and the rules governing the acceptance of candidates. We parted with much love in our Saviour and blessings from the Metropolitan. It seemed to us much good had been accomplished in this very short time, so many important contacts having been made, with both they and we looking forward to our next visit, God willing.

Consecration, from page 1

1982 he sought and received permission from the ecclesiastical authority to permanently leave the parish ministry and to lead the monastic life. He spent 18 months, 1983-1984, in Greece, living and studying in a variety of monastic communities, from small sketes to large cenobitic monasteries, both on Athos and in mainland Greece. In 1984 he was tonsured in a small Monastery established by his spiritual father, Archbishop Vasili (Krivocheine), in Western Europe.

The foundation of what was originally called St. Gregory Pala-

mas Monastery was laid by Bishop Sergios and his spiritual son, Monk Simon, in California, in far-northern Trinity County, in 1984. During his 18 month pilgrimage to monastic Greece, however, another community of that name had moved to California, and in order to avoid confusion, Archimandrite Sergios changed the designation of his community to St. Gregory of Sinai—an older and like-minded contemporary of St. Gregory Palamas.

St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery was to relocate first to the Bay Area

in 1986, and in 2000, to Lake County where a gift of 300 heavily-forested acres on the southern flanks of Mount Hannah (3,900 feet)—an extinct volcanic formation at the eastern end of the Mayacamas mountain range—in the town of Loch Lomond, gave the community—numbering 5 men at the time—its permanent home. Without water, utilities or buildings, the Brotherhood spent its first year living and worshipping in used Army tents, carrying in water, and enjoying the gift of the use of a neighbour’s garage for tasks



Father Theologos, Father Moses, Bishop Sergios, Hierodeacon Aimilianos and Father Simon

requiring electricity.

From the beginning, the self-supporting community had made its way materially by painting icons for churches and individuals. To this was added a modest greeting card project, using its own icons, for the most part, as the cards' designs. Gradually, with the addition of two more men to the Brotherhood, and thanks to an original push provided by a visiting Priest from Calgary, Canada, a substantial organic vegetable garden was established, to which a small fruit orchard was added. A well (530' deep) was dug; a multi-purpose building was constructed, 120' long and housing the Chapel (dedicated to St. Silouan the Athonite), trapeza, kitchen, laundry and cells for the monks and their guests, and this Summer of 2004, a second building to provide more adequate housing for its icon workshop and other needs, is underway.

From its beginning the Monastery was an institution of the Orthodox Church in America, one of the jurisdictions of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. Concerns centering on a growing awareness of the actual content of contemporary syncretistic ecumenism, particularly in its chief institutional expression, the World and Regional Councils of Churches, led the



Clergy and participants at the Consecration service

Monastery to affiliate, in September, 2000, with a Synod of Bishops who refrain from membership in organizations with syncretistic ideologies, practices and goals, the Eparchial Synod of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, whose President is the ruling Metropolitan of Boston. In 2001, the Holy Synod established a new Metropolis to serve the American states west of the Mississippi and elected Suffragan Bishop of Roslindale Moses as Metropolitan of Seattle.

In 2002 a gift of 10 acres located in the adjacent town of Kelseyville (whose post office supplies the Monastery with its mailing address) some 30 minutes from the Monastery was received, together with 3000 newly-planted olive trees which will come into production within 5-7 years. With this gift came a newly-constructed barn complete with an Italian-made, computer-driven olive press, giving the small Brotherhood additional possibilities of supporting its life and work.

In 2003 Abbot Sergios was given the rank of Archimandrite and in early 2004, the Holy Synod elected Archimandrite Sergios Suffragan Bishop to assist Metropolitan Moses in his ministry to the geographically-vast territory composing the Seattle Metropolis. He will serve as Bishop of Loch Lomond.

The consecration took place on Sunday July 26/August 8, 2004 at Saint Nectarios American Orthodox Cathedral in Seattle, where

Protopresbyter Neketas Palassis and Father Ihnat Ponomarchuk of the Cathedral were tireless and gracious hosts. Clergy from the Boston Metropolis were: Archimandrite Isaac, Hieromonk Theodore and Archdeacon Andrew, all of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline; Fr. Andrew Boroda from Minneapolis; and Deacon Christos Patitsas from the Pillars of Orthodoxy parish in Carlisle, PA. Bishop Sergios and Deacon Christos were fellow pilgrims on the 2003 pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Clergy from the Metropolis of Seattle were: Fr. Nicholas Liberis, Fr. Sergius Pelegrini, Fr. Constantine Parr, and Hierodeacon Aimilianos from St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery. Faithful from all the communities participated in the consecration which was a most joyous event.

The faithful greeted the chief hierarch, Metropolitan Makarios, and escorted him into the church. The Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Ruth Wolf, was joined by the Sisters of the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord and sang in the north kliros. The choir of the Nativity of the Theotokos Orthodox Church of Portland, Oregon, directed by John Presson, was joined by the monks of St. Gregory's in the south kliros. After Metropolitan Makarios had been vested, Metropolitan Moses and the assembled clergy came out from the Holy Sanctuary and took their places on either side of Metropolitan Makarios. Archdeacon Andrew and Deacon

Christos brought Fr. Sergios out through the Beautiful Gates and placed him before the chief hierarch.

At the questioning of the two Metropolitans, the candidate read the three Confessions of Faith. We were all struck by many things, particularly the timelessness of the living tradition of the Church as we saw the two bishops carefully questioning the candidate in this way, and the candidate's proclamation in a loud voice of the sacred doctrines of the Church.



Three Hierarchs: Metropolitan Moses, Bishop Sergios, and Metropolitan Makarios

The Divine Liturgy and consecration continued and later, after the Thrice-Holy Hymn, Metropolitan Moses and Archimandrite Isaac led the Bishop-elect around the Holy Altar Table to the chanting of hymns, and the two Metropolitans prayed and laid their hands on our Abbot, consecrating him to be a Bishop. He was vested in the episcopal vestments while the choir and people sang, "Axios!" at each

vesting. We then sang the acclamation to the new Bishop of Loch Lomond, and continued the celebration of the Divine Liturgy with the reading of the Epistle.

After the Gospel Reading, Bishop Sergios preached on praying for one another, and how we must never falter in our prayers, our Savior himself providing the example of prayer and humility for which we—and particularly bishops—must strive.

When the Divine Liturgy was finished Metropolitan Makarios

presented Bishop Sergios with the pastoral staff:

"Receive this staff that thou mayest shepherd the flock of Christ entrusted unto thee..."

The morning concluded with the taking of many pictures. We were very moved by the "family photo" of the new Bishop with his monks and the parish-

ioners who attend services at the monastery. They had all come from such a great distance, some of the families travelling with many children.

The celebration continued with a banquet at the Seattle Yacht Club. We all enjoyed the feast, overlooking the sparkling sea under a clear blue sky.

At the conclusion of the meal, the Honorable Les Ponomarchuk,

the eloquent master of ceremonies for the banquet and Chancellor of the Seattle Metropolis introduced the speakers, beginning with the Dean of the Cathedral, Protopresbyter Neketas Palassis.

Father Neketas told us to rejoice in the day that the Lord has made. Speaking to Bishop Sergios, he said, "We all know that you would have wanted someone else to assume this Episcopal responsibility, but we would have been distraught had you not accepted it...You have followed our Lord's example, Who said in the Garden of Gethsemene, 'Not my will, but Thy will be done.'" Father Neketas also thanked the parish committee, who worked so tirelessly with elaborate preparations for the event, which went so smoothly and with such dignity.

Metropolitan Moses spoke next, extending his heartfelt thanks to everyone, and reminding us of the hymns we had just sung.

"We celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and for this reason we chanted hymns from the service for Holy Pentecost during the vigil last night:

We celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit, and the time appointed for the promise, and the fulfilment of hope. How great is this mystery: it is both exceeding great and most venerable. Wherefore, we cry unto Thee: O Creator of all, Lord, glory be to Thee (sticheron from the Vigil for the feast of Pentecost).

"On this day we celebrate the legacy of the saints. In a certain sense this is a triumph of Orthodoxy and a guarantee that we may continue in our efforts to cultivate the spiritual life...We carry the

legacy of the saints that were teachers of our own instructors: St. Philaret, the elder Joseph, the elder Ieronymos, and many others. ...I ask you all to pray that God grant an outpouring of Grace for our new Bishop that he will carry on and walk in the paths of the saints."

Metropolitan Ephraim, recovering from a stroke and unable to make the trip west, had sent a letter to Bishop Sergios which was read by Judge Ponomarchuk. In it he sent his blessing and words of encouragement: "May God give you strength and patience, and a good sense of humor, (which you already have, but will need more of now), and above all, may He give you a thorough fear of God, and earnest love for Him."

The next speaker was Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto.

"This indeed is a joyous occasion; it is a mystery because it is one of the Mysteries of the Church (ordination). The Orthodox Church keeps Apostolic succession. Today as we were reading those prayers and celebrating that Liturgy, my thoughts went to our predecessors, and I say this in all humility, to the Apostles, the Disciples, who went out into the *ecumēni* to preach, to endure all things. I was especially thinking of Saint Paul, who is mentioned in the prayer that we read at the time of consecration. Saint Paul, who traveled, who endured much, who was an apostle to the nations, and that injunction stands today. Just as those disciples became apostles on the day of Pentecost, it stands today to go forth and to teach, and baptize all nations. Today we have participated in that mystery, in that process, that succession, because

through the prayer, the invoking of the descent of the Holy Spirit Archimandrite Sergios became Bishop Sergios, indeed a mystery. And these are the economies of God, Who loves us—as we know, more than we are able to realize—and provides for us in all ways, and many times mysteriously. How we have come together from various ethnicities, from all different parts of North America on this day, is a mystery. It is the providence of God; it is an expression of the love of God for His people. In the prayers of Saint Basil, we are a peculiar nation; we are the sons of adoption; we are a royal priesthood and indeed, on occasions like today, and that Mystery which took place today, at Saint Nectarios Cathedral, it is a reality. It is not a theory; it is not just history, it is not just some occasion noted on the calendar, it is a reality which all of us experience through the mercy of God.

"We offer to our beloved hierarch and brother in Christ congratulations, best wishes that God keep him, preserve him steadfast in the faith, that he persevere through all the trials that may come upon him."

Bishop Sergios was the last speaker. He thanked everyone present, and spoke of his happiness to be in Seattle, among those assembled together by God. He spoke of the need for education in the Church, and the need for the training of candidates for the diaconate and priesthood. He asked everybody to join him in the sacrifices we all must make for the good of the Church, and continued with a request for everyone's prayers:

"Please pray for me. In addition to being given a staff to lean

on, I know that I lean on your prayers more than anything else, because it is through prayer, as we saw in the Gospel this morning, that God works miracles.”

Although no monk ever wants to assume the responsibilities of a Bishop, neither does he want to become an example of disobedience. In his remarks Bishop Sergios described the event as a difficult transition for him and for his community, but one to which the Church's hierarchs called them and to which they attempted and would continue to attempt to respond with good will and in a good heart. The Holy Synod, recognizing the dearth of clergy in its Seattle Metropolia (which covers roughly the US west of the Mississippi) was careful to stress that Bishop Sergios' relationship to St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery would not be altered and that every care would be exercised to not burden the

ongoing life and work of our Brotherhood, to enable him to continue to serve the monastery as its Igoumenos, for which Bishop Sergios expressed our thanks.

After a brief rest, we returned to the Cathedral for Great Vespers for the Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon. Liturgy was celebrated the following morning, after which we enjoyed a festal meal. Among those getting the blessing of the new Bishop was Elizabeth Eaton, from Seattle, living now in Germany, who is a singer and vocal trainer. She and Bishop Sergios began discussing singing in church choirs, and before this conversation went very far, the monks of the monastery—never ones to pass up the possibility of a voice lesson—were back in church, receiving valuable and useful vocal instruction from Elizabeth.

We then bade farewell to our dear Fathers and friends in Seattle,

and in particular to Nina Seco who seemed to be just about everywhere throughout the weekend, keeping things moving and tending to the many details of an event such as this that demand so much attention and care. Fr. Simon was dropped off at the airport, and flew back to California, arriving home a day before the Bishop and the other Fathers. Fr. Andrew Boroda and his sons, Elias and Luke drove from Seattle to the monastery and likewise arrived before the Bishop and were on hand to receive him. In the evening of Tuesday, August 10th, (Martyrs Callinic and Theodota), we were alerted via cell phone by Fr. Moses that the episcopal party was on its way up the mountain. And so with lighted lamps, with bread and salt, and with the ringing of the monastery bells the newly-consecrated Bishop of Loch Lomond was welcomed home to his See.



Bishop Sergios with his monks and parishioners from California

Saint Anna's Summer Camp 2004

by Father John Fleser

Saint Anna's Camp began after the Divine Liturgy for Saints Peter and Paul on Monday, July 12/June 29 and ended on Friday, July 16/3. The theme for the week was *The Holy Mysteries: The Gateway into the Kingdom of Heaven*. The Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion (Eucharist), Confession, Marriage, Unction and Ordination to the ranks of the clergy were covered during the week. The children ranged in age from 6–16. Thirty-three children attended the camp and they were divided into three groups according to their ages. The cost for the camp was \$55.00 for the first child in the family, \$50.00 for the second, and \$45.00 for the third.

Each day started with morning prayers and a short talk by Father John Fleser on an aspect of the theme; then choir practice with everyone in attendance. Thereafter, the children went with their assigned group to different activities each day. St. Mark of Ephesus Orthodox Cathedral's Church Hall was made available for us during the week. Classes were held in both halls. The hours were from 9:00 AM–4:00 PM each day.

Included within the day was a reading of a life of a Saint and discussion on the theme for the week. Arts and crafts activities included such things as decorating a T-shirt, painting a flower vase and putting together a binder to hold all the handouts for the week. Of course there were breaks for snacks and lunch.

The teachers helped each group prepare a play to be presented on Friday afternoon for the parents



Metropolitan Ephraim speaks to one of the classes in St. Mark's Church Hall

and guests. This year the younger groups presented *Daniel in the Lions' Den* and *The Three Children Being Cast into the Fire*. The older group presented a play about helping your neighbor. Each day passed by quickly, for the teachers were well prepared to keep students busy with a variety of activities. It seemed that no sooner had the day begun than it was 4:00 PM; time to go home for the day.

On Friday Metropolitan Ephraim visited the camp for the day. He spoke to the campers after the choir practice and then went around to each class during the day. Metropolitan Ephraim attended the performance of the plays, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

This camp is a labor of love for all involved because each realized that during this week the children were exposed to the Orthodox faith and the teachers were planting seeds in the hope that they will take root and grow in the hearts of those in attendance. The children were like sponges absorbing water for they listened intently as they learned about the Mysteries in the Church. The teachers, in many ways, learned as they prepared their lessons and instructed the children but, most importantly, they saw the value of exposing

our children to an Orthodox way of life.

The handouts sent home with the children included Lives of the Saints and Scriptural passages related to each of the Mysteries. Metropolitan Ephraim gave each child a diocesan pamphlet and a small cross. It is our hope that the parents will review the materials and discuss the subject matter with their children throughout the year.

Ipswich Parish of Saint John the Russian

by James Ward

The parish of Saint John the Russian the New Confessor in Ipswich, MA was founded in 1975 by three pious families. Several names were considered for the new parish, without consensus among the founders. It was decided to ask Father and Elder Panteleimon for his help in choosing a name. He suggested that we put the various names on the Holy Table during liturgy at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, after which the name would be drawn by lot. He also asked if he could add one saint's name to the list. The name he proposed to add was a saint not well known in America, but greatly revered in Greece, and one who had been an intercessor in behalf of Father Panteleimon's own family. The founders gladly agreed, and St. John the Russian was added to the lots.

It is felt by many in the parish that we did not choose St. John, but rather St. John chose us.

The parishioners learned about St. John's life and miracles, how he had been a young and pious Russian soldier in battles against the Turks during the late 18th century. How he had been taken captive by the Turks and sold into slavery to a Moslem cavalry officer in Prokopion of Cappadocia. How he had refused to give up his faith in return for riches and favors of this world, choosing rather to live in a stable, to say his prayers and tend the animals as a slave. How he impressed even his Moslem overlords by his Christian

example and simple devotion to God and to the duties assigned to him. Without complaint, even with joy, St. John had accepted his lot, living separately from the godless local culture of his time. Many among the little flock perceived the relevance of St. John's example to our own plight at this time in America and found consolation in the beauty and simplicity of his life.

By the prayers of St. John and with much guidance from Holy Transfiguration Monastery, the



Father John Knox holds up his grandson, newly-baptized Andrew Knox

founders were able to purchase an old church building and renovate a portion of it suitable for Orthodox services. In December, 1975, the little flock was granted its petition to attach itself to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, under the omophorion of Metropolitan Saint Philaret of New York.

The first official Liturgy at Saint John's was celebrated by Metropolitan Saint Philaret himself, in January, 1976. Thus, with

the blessings of faithful hierarchy, the intercessions of the Saint and the joy of new laborers in the true vineyard, the parish of St. John began its life in Christ.

By his intercessions, St. John heaped blessings on the fledgling flock. His presence was keenly felt by many parishioners from the beginning. Wonders and miracles became apparent in response to prayerful petitions to St. John as intercessor before God. There were healings from grievous disease.

Those who wished to come to Ipswich but had been prevented by economic circumstances found their way made clear. On more than one occasion, St. John's presence at the services was perceived. The parish flourished, bringing many to the flock of the Orthodox faithful. The parishioners received these many blessings with faith and humility. The ranks of faithful at St. John's grew to over one hundred and fifty. The building was beautifully adorned, and outreach to American converts became a cornerstone of the parish.

All was well for a while. Then the evil one found ways to drive his pernicious wedge into the hearts of some, even to the level of the parish clergy. Soon, our parish found itself in a struggle for survival and the future became unclear.

Once again, answering the prayers of his newfound loyal and

faithful flock in the new world, St. John provided the answers. The building, having become a symbol of worldly achievement to many, was gladly given up by St. John's faithful. It was as if the Saint, a lover of simple surroundings in his life, a new Job upon the dung-heap, desired faithfulness and humility for his flock as opposed to the grand schemes of men. A family in the parish came forward and offered their home for services. About 90 percent of the parishioners left the building, but carried the true Orthodox Faith and St. John the Russian, The New Confessor, to a new temporary home. Our faithful hierarchs of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America sent a skillful and loving priest, Father George Kochergin, who helped heal the wounds and sorrows of our hearts. Eventually, God provided a modest but sufficient building to become St. John's home in the New World. Then, having blessed the flock to become firmly planted in True Orthodoxy in a new, spiritually edifying building, Our Saviour brought forth from among our ranks Father John Knox to be our priest, and Father James Graves to be our deacon.

As a parish of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, under the omophorion of our faithful hierarch Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, the parish of St. John continues to shine as a beacon for the truth in America.

Over the 28 years since St. John "chose" his flock in the new world, more than 175 children and adults have been baptized into the flock of Christ at the parish of St. John the Russian. The saint's many wonders and miracles are celebrated each year on his feast day by hundreds of faithful who come from all over North America to honor the memory of this most wondrous saint.

Through the prayers of St. John the Russian, the New Confessor, may we be guided always in the paths of truth.



Divine Liturgy on the Feast of St. John the Russian in the Ipswich church dedicated to his honor



Metropolitan Ephraim preaching

Called to Serve in the Church

(Excerpt from a sermon from Saint Metropolitan Philaret of New York concerning ordination)
Sermons and Teachings of His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret, Volume I, p. 252.



When a young man faces the question of whether to become a pastor, then many decide one way or the other depending on whether they feel “called” to pastoral service, or they feel no such calling. Those who refuse say, “Although I studied theology, I don’t feel any call to pastoral service.” Vladyka Anthony did not accept such arguments, and opposed them in the most categorical way. He said there is one genuine call—that is the call of the Church, which summons you to this service, for which you received corresponding knowledge. But this subjective “feeling of being called” (when in fact you are calling yourself to this service) should in no way be relied upon. How often have there been cases when it seemed to a person that he was “called,” and he took upon himself this service, and it turned out very badly, sometimes even reaching the point where he was defrocked. The opposite also is true. There have been cases when a young man, not

feeling any “call,” for one reason or another put on a ryassa anyway, and then he was seized by the greatness of pastoral service and with time was to be found among the ranks of the best servants of the Church. For this reason, only one *call* is objectively genuine. This is the call of the Church, when she herself calls her chosen one to serve Her. This is why, when I have had to talk with people with indisputably good qualities for pastoral service, but they refuse it, I tell them, “Remember, when your mother the Church summons you, it is dangerous to refuse. If you yourselves think it over or talk with one another, that’s one thing, but if you are called by one of us archpastors, then that’s entirely another. The summons of an archpastor is always the summons of the Church Herself, and if you do not want to agree and do not attend to this summons, then you are disobeying the Church Herself.”

The Christian’s Attitude Towards His Passions

Conclusion by Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov in *Ascetical Essays*

At first glance, “The fulfilment of the commandments teaches a man his infirmity,” seems to be a strange turn of events. This, however, is a saying proven by experience. Only by the diligent fulfilment of the commandments of Christ can a man be convinced of the complete powerlessness of the old Adam in putting into effect the new ordinance dictated by the spiritual law. Furthermore, it is only through the compassion of Christ that this law may be fulfilled (St. Mark the Ascetic, *On the Law of the Spirit*, ch. 32).

In the almighty Right Hand of Providence, sin itself, which dwells within a man and which embraces his entire being and all the members of his soul and body, helps him towards success, if that man is a true Christian.

Poverty of spirit, the recognition of one’s fall, the acknowledgment of the necessity of the Redeemer, the striving with all one’s being to confess Him Who redeemed us, the Son of God and God, our Lord Jesus Christ: all these are the fruits of the battle with the passions. These fruits are the pledge of eternal blessedness.

Poverty of spirit, the fall of mankind and a living confession of the Redeemer are unknown to the son of this age. He works for the passions, he sees in himself an abundance of merits, he sees in himself virtues, and either awaits nothing in heaven, as he never gives any thought to heaven, or he awaits there a reward as something owed him; he awaits it on account of his deep ignorance of the one and only virtue which receives recompense in heaven. This virtue is Christianity.

The servant of God who fulfils the commandments of the Gospel increasingly discovers passions in himself, and as the grace of the Holy Spirit forms in him the blessed spiritual conditions of poverty of spirit, weeping, meekness, mercy, chastity and a spiritual mode of thought, he acknowledges himself as the sinner of sinners who has done nothing good, who is guilty of numberless sins and worthy of eternal torment in the fire of Gehenna on account of his continual breach of the commandments of God.

The Holy Fathers, seeing in themselves the fruit which blossoms forth from the battle with the passions, did not desire to curtail this battle. They desired to patiently persist in it valiantly and magnanimously (St. Abba Dorotheus, *Instruc.* 13). O blessed ones. They sought no other perfection than perfection in humility. They sought not to acquire hope of salvation in anything of their own; rather, they sought to acquire it in Christ. Where there is no humility, there no Christian virtues are present; but where true humility exists, there all the virtues are present in their fulness. There Christ is present. There the passions and the *enemy*, the Devil, who wages war by means of them *hath no advantage* against the servant of Christ, *and the son of iniquity, sin, shall avail to hurt him no more* (Ps 88:21).

Let us follow in the steps of the Fathers and attain to the haven of eternal blessedness. Amen

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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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