



THE WONDERWORKER

The Official Newsletter of the Western Rite Communities of ROCOR

Lent 2017



The Wonderworker Newsletter: The Official Newsletter of ROCOR's Western Rite Communities

From the Dean's Desk



“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and he will save the humble of spirit.” (LXX Psalm 33:19) .

Pope St Leo the Great (390-461 AD) ascribed the forty days of fasting prior to Pascha to apostolic origins. These forty days of fasting, prayer and almsgiving are a season of penitence and repentance for the faithful as they journey toward the joyful commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ. They strengthen us and prepare us through humility, self-examination and self-denial to be better Orthodox Christians.

We often have heard St Paul and other Church Fathers refer to these journeys in the spiritual life like unto athletic training for an athletic event. In contemporary times, we often see athletic teams engage in some sort of 'pre-season' before the main season begins. The Holy Church is no different.

The Greeks began to anticipate the Great Lent by a lighter penitential pre-season prior to Lent. Saint Gregory the Great corresponded to this tradition and added three additional weeks of preparation prior to Ash Wednesday. These Sundays were called Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Sundays – *Latin for “seventieth, sixtieth, and fiftieth.”*

This 'pre-Lent' pre-season of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima are not Lenten days per se, but they are penitential. The idea is that we cannot walk or turn away from the world and the flesh 'cold turkey', but need some time for warm-up and getting back into shape, both physically and spiritually.

May we make this important time as spiritually profitable as possible in our own lives. Increased study of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and other devotional reading, along with regular self-examination, a renewed commitment to daily prayer, and fasting along with almsgiving will help us along our spiritual path to paradise. May we ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us along the way.

May we also call to mind once more the words of the Psalmist,

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and he will save the humble of spirit.” (LXX Psalm 33:19) .

May you have a spiritually profitable Lent and a joyous Pascha !

Yours in Christ,
Archpriest Mark Rowe
Dean, ROCOR WR Communities

(En Espanol)



"El SEÑOR está cerca de los contritos de corazón, y salvará al humilde de espíritu" (LXX Salmo 33:19).

El Papa San León Magno (390-461 dC) atribuyó los cuarenta días de ayuno antes de Pasca a los orígenes apostólicos. Estos cuarenta días de ayuno, oración y limosna son un tiempo de penitencia y arrepentimiento para los fieles mientras caminan hacia la alegre conmemoración de la Resurrección de Cristo. Nos fortalecen y nos preparan a través de la humildad, el autoexamen y la abnegación para ser mejores cristianos ortodoxos.

A menudo hemos oído que San Pablo y otros Padres de la Iglesia se refieren a estos viajes en la vida espiritual como si fueran entrenamiento atlético para un evento atlético. En la época contemporánea, a menudo vemos equipos atléticos

participar en algún tipo de "pre-temporada" antes de que comience la temporada principal. La Santa Iglesia no es diferente.

Los griegos comenzaron a anticiparse a la Gran Cuaresma por una pre-temporada penitencial más ligera antes de la Cuaresma. San Gregorio el Grande correspondía a esta tradición y añadió tres semanas adicionales de preparación antes del Miércoles de Ceniza. Estos domingos fueron llamados Septuagesima, Sexagesima, y Quinquagesima los domingos - Latín para "septuagésimo, sesenta y cincuenta".

Esta pre-temporada pre-Cuaresma de Septuagesima, Sexagesima y Quinquagesima no son días de Cuaresma per se, pero son penitenciales. La idea es que no podemos caminar o alejarnos del mundo y de la carne "pavo frío", pero necesitamos tiempo para calentarnos y volver a ponernos en forma física y espiritualmente.

Que podamos hacer este tiempo importante tan espiritualmente rentable como sea posible en nuestras propias vidas. Un mayor estudio de la Escritura, los Padres de la Iglesia y otras lecturas devocionales, junto con un autoexamen regular, un renovado compromiso con la oración diaria y el ayuno junto con la limosna, nos ayudarán en nuestro camino espiritual hacia el paraíso. Que pidamos al Espíritu Santo que nos fortalezca y nos guíe por el camino.

Recordemos también una vez más las palabras del salmista,

"El SEÑOR está cerca de los contritos de corazón, y salvará al humilde de espíritu" (LXX Salmo 33:19).

¡Que tengas una Cuaresma espiritualmente rentable y una Pascha alegre!

Suyo en Cristo,
Arcipreste Mark Rowe
Dean, Comunidades ROCOR WR



The Fathers on Fasting

Fasting was ordained in Paradise. The first injunction was delivered to Adam, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.' 'You shall not eat' is a law of fasting and abstinence." The general argument is rather against excess than in support of ceremonial abstinence. In Paradise there was no wine, no butchery of beasts, no eating of flesh. Wine came in after the flood. Noah became drunk because wine was new to him. So fasting is older than drunkenness. Esau was defiled, and made his brother's slave, for the sake of a single meal. It was fasting and prayer which gave Samuel to Hannah. Fasting brought forth Samson. Fasting begets prophets, strengthens strong men. Fasting makes lawgivers wise, is the soul's safeguard, the body's trusty comrade, the armor of the champion, the training of the athlete. St. Basil, in his homilies on the Holy Spirit

Suppose you have ordered yourself not to eat fish; you will find that the enemy continually makes you long to eat it. You are filled with an uncontrollable desire for the thing that is forbidden. In this way you can see how Adam's fall typifies what happens to all of us. Because he was told not to eat from a particular tree, he felt irresistibly attracted to the one thing that was forbidden him. St. John of Karpathos "The Philokalia: the Complete Text" (volume I), by St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. By G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and (Bishop) Kallistos Ware, (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), pp. 298 - 309

True fasting lies in rejecting evil, holding one's tongue, suppressing one's hatred, and banishing one's lust, evil words, lying, and betrayal of vows. *St. Basil the Great*

It is necessary most of all for one who is fasting to curb anger, to accustom himself to meekness and condescension, to have a contrite heart, to repulse impure thoughts and desires, to examine his conscience, to put his mind to the test and to verify what good has been done by us in this or any other week, and which deficiency we have corrected in ourselves in the present week. This is true fasting. *St. John Chrysostom.*

"And finally, did not the Lord Jesus Himself begin His divine ministry of the salvation of mankind with a long, forty day fast? And did not He, in this way, clearly show that we must make a serious beginning to our life as Christians with fasting? First, the fast, and then all the rest comes together with, and through, the fast. By His own example, the Lord showed us how great a weapon fasting is. With this weapon, He vanquished Satan in the wilderness, and with it was victorious over the three chief satanic passions with which Satan tempted Him: love of ease love of praise and love of money. These are three destructive greeds, the three greatest traps into which the evil enemy of the human race lures Christ's soldiers." *St. Nikolai Velimirovic*



St. Nikolai Velimirovic

SERMON ON THE PRODIGAL SON



-St Cyril of Alexandria

SERMON CVII.

LK 15:11-32. *And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of your goods that comes to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son gathered every thing together, and journeyed into a far country, and there scattered his goods by riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he desired to fill his belly with the husks which the swine were eating: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread in abundance, and I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more 'worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and went to his father. And while He was yet a great way off, his father saw*

him, and his bowels yearned, and he ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And his son said unto him, My father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But his father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the chief robe, and clothe him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and we will eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive: and was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.----Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard the sound of music and rejoicing. And he called one of the servants, and asked him what these things meant. And he said unto him, Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and besought him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo! all these years do I serve you, and never have transgressed your commandment, and you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this your son, who has, eaten up your wealth with harlots, is come, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, My son, you are ever with me: and all that is mine is yours. But it was fitting to make merry and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive: and was lost, and is found.

I HEAR one of the holy prophets trying to win unto repentance those who are far from God, and saying, "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God: for you have become weak in your iniquity. Take with you words, and return to the Lord our God." What sort of words then did he, under the influence of the Spirit, command them to take with them? Or were they not such as become those who wish to repent; such namely, as would appease God, Who is gentle, and loves mercy. For He even said by one of the holy prophets, "Return you returning children, and I will heal your breaches." And yet again by the voice of Ezekiel, "Return you altogether from your wickednesses, O house of Israel. Cast away from you all your iniquities which you have committed, that they be not to you for a punishment of iniquity. For I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, as that he should turn from his evil way and live." And the same truth Christ here also teaches us, by this most beautifully composed parable, which I will now to the best of my ability endeavour to discuss, briefly gathering up its broad statements, and explaining and defending the ideas which it contains.

It is the opinion then of some, that by the two sons are signified the holy angels, and we the dwellers upon earth: and that the elder one, who lived soberly, represents the company of the holy angels, while the younger and profligate son is the human race. And there are some among us who give it a different explanation, arguing that by the elder and well conducted son is signified Israel after the flesh: while by the other, whose choice it was to live in the lust of pleasures, and who removed far from his father, is depicted the company of the Gentiles. With these explanations I do not agree: but I would have him who loves instruction, search after that which is true and unobjectionable. What then I say is as follows, "giving occasions to the wise, and to the just offering knowledge," as Scripture commands: for they will examine for a fitting meaning the explanations proposed to them. If then we refer the upright son to the person of the holy angels, we do not find him speaking such words as become them, nor sharing their feelings towards repentant sinners, who turn from an impure life to that conduct which is worthy of admiration. For the Saviour of all and Lord says, that "there is joy in heaven before the holy angels over one sinner that repents." But the son, who is described to us in the present parable as being acceptable unto his father, and leading a blameless life, is represented as being angry,

and as even having proceeded so far in his unloving sentiments as to find fault with his father for his natural affection for him who was saved. "For he would not, it says, go into the house," being vexed at the reception of the penitent almost before he had come to his senses, and because there had even been slain the calf in his honour, and his father had made for him a feast. But this, as I said, is at variance with the feelings of the holy angels: for they rejoice and praise God when they see the inhabitants of the earth being saved. For so when the Son submitted to be born in the flesh of a woman at Bethlehem, they carried the joyful news to the shepherds, saying, "Fear you not: for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people, that there is born to you today in the city of David a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord." And crowning with lauds and praises Him Who was born, they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and upon earth peace, and among men good-will."

But if any one say, that Israel according to the flesh is meant by the virtuous and sober son, we are again prevented from assenting to this opinion by the fact, that in no way whatsoever is it fitting to say of Israel that he chose a blameless life. For throughout the whole of the inspired Scripture, so to say, we may see them accused of being rebels and disobedient. For they were told by the voice of Jeremiah, "What fault have your fathers found in Me, that they have wandered far from Me, and have gone after vanities, and become vain?" And in similar terms God somewhere spoke by the voice of Isaiah, "This people draws near unto Me; with their lips they honour Me, but their heart is very far from Me: but in vain do they fear Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." And how then can any one apply to those who are thus blamed the words used in the parable of the virtuous and sober son? For he said, "Lo! all these years do I serve you, and never have I transgressed your commandment." But they would not have been blamed for their mode of life, had it not been that transgressing the divine commandments, they betook themselves to a careless and polluted mode of life.

And yet again,----for I think it right to mention this also,----some would refer to the person of our Saviour that fatted calf which the father killed when his son was called unto conversion. But how then could the virtuous son, who is described as wise and prudent, and constant in his duty, and whom some even refer to the person of the holy angels, treat it as a reason for anger and vexation that the calf was slain? For one can find no proof of the powers above being grieved when Christ endured death in the flesh, and, so to speak, was slain in our behalf. Rather they rejoiced, as I said, in seeing the world saved by His holy blood. And what reason too had the virtuous son for saying "you never gave me a kid." For what blessing is wanting to the holy angels, inasmuch as the Lord of all has bestowed upon them with bounteous hand a plentiful supply of spiritual gifts? Or of what sacrifice stood they in need as regards their own state? For there was no necessity for the Emmanuel to suffer also in their behalf. But if any one imagine, as I have already said before, that the carnal Israel is meant by the virtuous and sober son, how can he say with truth "you never gave me a kid?" For whether we call it calf or kid, Christ is to be understood as the sacrifice offered for sin. But He was sacrificed, not for the Gentiles only, but that He might also redeem Israel, who by reason of his frequent transgression of the law had brought upon himself great blame. And the wise Paul bears witness to this, saying, "For this reason Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by His blood, suffered outside the gate."

What then is the object of the parable? Let us examine the occasion which led to it; for so we shall learn the truth. The blessed Luke therefore had himself said a little before of Christ the Saviour of us all, "And all the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying, This man receives sinners and eats " with them." As therefore the Pharisees and Scribes made this outcry at His gentleness and love to man, and wickedly and impiously blamed Him for receiving and teaching men whose lives were impure, Christ very necessarily set before them the present parable, to show them clearly this very thing, that the God of all requires even him who is thoroughly steadfast, and firm, and who knows how to live holily, and has attained to the highest praise for sobriety of conduct, to be earnest in following His will, so that when any are called unto repentance, even if they be men highly blameable, he must rejoice rather, and not give way to an unloving vexation on their account.

For we also sometimes experience something of this sort. For some there are who live a perfectly honourable and consistent life, practising every kind of virtuous action, and abstaining from every thing disapproved by the law of God, and crowning themselves with perfect praises in the sight of God and of men: while another is perhaps weak and trodden down, and humbled unto every kind of wickedness, guilty of base deeds, loving impurity, given to covetousness, and stained with all evil. And yet such a one often in old age turns unto God, and asks the forgiveness of his former offences: he prays for mercy, and putting away from him his readiness to fall into sin, sets his affection on virtuous deeds. Or even perhaps when about to close his mortal life, he is admitted to divine baptism, and puts away his offences, God being merciful unto him. And perhaps sometimes persons are indignant at [505 this, and even say, 'This man, who has been guilty of such and such actions, and has spoken such and such words, has not paid unto the judge the retribution of his conduct, but has been counted worthy of a grace thus noble and admirable: he has been inscribed among the sons of God, and honoured with the glory of the saints.' Such complaints men sometimes give utterance too from an empty narrowness of mind, not conforming to the purpose of the universal Father. For He greatly rejoices when He sees those who were lost obtaining salvation, and raises them up again to that which they were in the beginning, giving them the dress of freedom, and adorning them with the chief robe, and putting a ring upon their hand, even the orderly behaviour which is pleasing to God and suitable to the free.

It is our duty, therefore, to conform ourselves to that which God wills: for He heals those who are sick; He raises those who are fallen; He gives a helping hand to those who have stumbled; He brings back him who has wandered; He forms anew unto a praiseworthy and blameless life those who were wallowing in the mire of sin; He seeks those who were lost; He raises as from the dead those who had suffered the spiritual death. Let us also rejoice: let us, in company with the holy angels, praise Him as being good, and loving unto men; as gentle, and not remembering evil. For if such is our state of mind, Christ will receive us, by Whom and with Whom, to God the Father be praise and dominion with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen.

-Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke (1859) Sermons 99-109. (Luke 13:22-16:13) pp. 460-516.



Rachel's Corner

ABORTION AND INTELLECTUAL FAILURE

Part Two of a Three-Part Series

Fr. James Rosselli

The anti-life movement, like a field of toadstools, has blossomed. Not in numbers, for its numbers are declining; not in law, for the laws are poised to change and have been changing; and not in popular opinion, because opinion is shifting dramatically away from the pro-death positions.

The blossoming is occurring in the field of intellectual degradation. As the pro-life movement gains more and more ground, the pro-death movement must face the reality of what they're about. So, their narrative has shifted. The old "blob of tissue" argument doesn't work, anymore, because no-one is buying it. They are admitting to the humanity of the fetus, and have declared it irrelevant to the mother's "right to bodily integrity."

Arguments don't really matter to the advocates of death. As we discussed in Part I, abortion and the rest of it: euthanasia, assisted suicide, selective care etc., are not driven by an intellectual position but by a demonic lust for blood made manifest in the movement's followers. Sooner or later, though, people need a rationale for what they do. People need to think of themselves as good and reasonable, and "I have a sub-cognitive, visceral lust for the blood of the helpless" is not a preferred self-image even for the most hardened.

Evil's tool, in this as in so many things, is the degradation of the intellectual process through the reformulation of language. Thus, an organization whose only planning is devoted to avoiding parenthood calls itself "Planned Parenthood." A movement committed to unceasing social and political intimidation calls itself

“pro-freedom of choice.” A procedure whose only purpose is death is called “health care,” and which increases a woman’s vulnerability to cancer, hormonal clinical depression, barrenness and chronic miscarriage is called “women’s health.” The corollary of this, of course, is that if one opposes abortionism one opposes women’s health, access to health care and personal freedom. The blanket term for this is “anti-woman,” the supposition being that not supporting a woman’s “right” to murder her child makes one a misogynist. One is imposing oneself between a woman and an activity she might prefer, and is therefore “intolerant.” In disagreeing with another’s position one is “imposing one’s position upon another,” and is therefore an “oppressor.”

This sort of labeling and name-calling is essential to the pro-death cause, because it’s their only recourse. There is no logical justification for the murder of a child by his or her mother. So, an alternative “logic” must be invented: an anti-rational “logic” driven by personal preference and expressing itself in shibboleth. “If you think *this*,” we are told, “you are a *that*!”

Much of the intellectual cowardice we see on the part of the actually sane can be attributed to fear of being called a *that* by the demonized. That’s because the death advocates have successfully blurred the lines between morality and politics.

Politics and morality are different. Right and wrong are not “positions,” out in the marketplace to compete with other “positions.” They are fixed values. To declare this is not to “get political.” but to “get moral.” Our culture is rediscovering this, and its attitude toward abortion is changing.

Accordingly, hell is panicking. For forty-four years it has relied on the blood of human sacrifice to fuel its mission of chaos and discord, and the fuel is drying up. In response, hell has struck the death movement with an even more profound madness: a proposition that “post-birth abortion,” even up to the age of five or six, should be permissible. The grounds: “They are not yet self-aware, and at any rate can’t support themselves.”

The fact that children are quite self-aware by the age of three is irrelevant to the death advocates, and the irrelevance of that position to begin with is lost on them. They need words to say, so they use these particular words to fill the bill.

Will this sort of thing ever happen? How can we discount it? Sixty years ago, who ever imagined that doctors would be “assisting suicides” or that unrestrained abortion would not only be the law of the land, but would hold a privileged position in our legal system?

The choice we face going forward is between sanity and insanity. The “post-modern” culture that permeates our educational system, our media, entertainment and arbiters of “fashion,” maintains there is no objective reality; no natural law, no good and evil, no right and wrong except what is self-determined by each of us as individuals.

On the other side, we have intellectual clarity: the ability to recognize Reality whether we agree with it or not, to see what is in front of us and acknowledge that it is there, and draw moral conclusions from it.

Sanity is impossible without God. Unless we are able to acknowledge that the world was here before we got here, and will continue on after we leave, we run vanity’s risk of trying to re-create it after our own image.

God is found here, in His Church, and we have the responsibility to get out into the marketplace of ideas and speak the Truth.

We have had an upsurge of prayer, lately: lovers of Christ of every sort have made it their business to enter the marketplace without apology or intimidation and speak sanity to a nation without moorings. As a result, abortion businesses are closing right and left and the forces of hell are in a panic. In their panic they will

scream ever louder, speak ever more outrageously, even, as we have seen, become violent. Like frogs, they will inflate themselves to make it seem they are in the majority. They are not, anymore.

We must cherish and give thanks for the rumblings of transformation in our nation, and pray—and work—to push them home, to the Glory of God and the salvation of souls.

*Fr. James is Rector of St. Joseph of Arimathea Orthodox Church and House of Prayer
in La Porte, Indiana.*

44th Annual

MARCH FOR LIFE

By Matushka Tamara Cook



Fr. John Cook

On January 27, 2017, Fr. John Cook and I participated in the 44th annual March for Life in Washington D.C. The March takes place along Constitution Avenue. It begins down by the Washington Monument near approximately 15th Street and the route follows a path past Congress and up to final destination of the Supreme Court building. It is always held on or near the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade ruling.

One reason I think participating in the March is important is that we show the youth who participate that this matters.

Overwhelmingly, this is an event of teens and young adults who are excited about their faith. The March is an opportunity for compassion and mercy. People share their stories about how abortion has affected their lives, directly and indirectly. Women who have had abortions talk about being coerced into abortions, about their ignorance that lead to their abortions. Men talk about the children they were willing to raise alone, but the mothers aborted their children. Children talk about mothers who mourn the children they aborted. Abortion workers share the reasons they left the abortion industry and the horrors that made them realize that abortion truly is murder. At the end of the March, the Silent No More campaign testifies on the steps of the Supreme Court building while anyone who chooses can go speak to their Congressman and Senator about why abortion destroys more than just 'a few cells'.



Most of all, the March for Life is an opportunity for us to come

together in prayer and show our love. It is not a place of scorn or judgment, it is an open confession of healing and hope for a tomorrow where God's gift of life is respected and celebrated. Before the March we pray together, as we march we sing hymns and pray and after the March we pray. To experience so many coming together of one mind, in love and compassion, makes the event warm regardless of the temperature. Next year's 45th annual March will take place on January 19, 2018.

SOWING SEED AND REAPING THE HARVEST

By Fr. Victor Novak

Rector of Holy Cross Orthodox Parish in Omaha, Nebraska



In 2016, Holy Cross parish in Omaha, Nebraska received nine new members into the Orthodox Church and ended the year with four catechumens. The nine new communicant members included six adults and three children from four households. The four catechumens come from three different households, and three of the four had been essentially unchurched.

Compared to the growth of some evangelical churches this may not sound like much, but that would be like comparing apples to oranges.

Evangelical churches are interested in decisions. The Orthodox Church is interested in discipleship. Asking for decisions is easy and requires no real commitment. Forming disciples takes time and real commitment.

The Western Rite has been restored to the Orthodox Church and Western Rite mission-plants are being established. These congregations are confident about the Faith that they hold, but they are sometimes unsure about how to effectively share this Faith with others, especially when they often have but minimal resources. I am sometimes asked by other clergy, Where do we begin?

FOCUS ON THE GREAT COMMISSION

We begin at the beginning. The mission of the Church is not just to preserve the Faith, but to proclaim it. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a Great Commission to the earliest Church: "An Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20).

That same Commission has been passed on to the Church of today, and to each of its parishes and mission congregations. It is important for every parish and mission to be focused on the Great Commission. It is all too easy to get sidetracked and to think of evangelism as little more than putting up a sign and taking out an ad while the local church does everything but evangelize. A good way to keep focused on the Great Commission

is to have a Mission Statement and to refer to it often. At Holy Cross parish our Mission Statement is, “To Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, and the fullness of the Apostolic Faith to those who do.”

Newspaper and telephone directory advertising is generally ineffective and little should be invested in it. Even before the dawn of the Internet statistics showed that only 2% of the people who would join any church in America in a given year would have first visited because they saw an ad in the local paper or phone book, and that percentage is undoubtedly much lower today.

EFFECTIVE OUTREACH

So, what can work for a mission-plant or a parish with very limited resources? About 80% of those who will join any church in America this year will join because a friend or relative first invited them to church. Nearly all of the rest will have been drawn to visit through the information gained from an attractive, informative and compelling church Website. Of those visitors who were not invited by a friend or relative, about 80% will have been reached by the church’s Website and Facebook page.

The two most effective ways to advance the Great Commission and to grow our churches is to 1. Mobilize churchmen, both lay and clerical, to invite family and friends to church, and 2. To establish a presence on the Internet with an attractive, informative and inviting church Website and Facebook page.

Mobilizing the whole church is both Scriptural and effective. Remember, 80% of all those who will join any church this year will do so because they were invited by a friend or relative, and every time a new person joins the church he or she will have a whole new circle of friends and relatives to invite.

The Holy Scriptures record that Jesus’ original disciples used this method effectively: “[Andrew] first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus... Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathaniel said to him, ‘can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’” (John 1:41-42, 45-46).

Lay people do not even have to know how to share the Gospel, although that would be helpful, and they do not have to be apologists able to answer every question and objection. All they need do is to invite, invite and keep inviting - “We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.” We have found a good church. They teach the Bible and the people are so friendly. Come and see.

Seven of the nine people who were received into the Orthodox Church at Holy Cross parish this past year had been invited by a friend or a relative. Two of the seven were introduced to the parish through the Internet. Of the four catechumens, two had been invited by friends or family and two had found the church through its Internet presence.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY VISIT

Sadly, some churches talk about everything but the Lord. An evangelistic Church must proclaim Christ and Him crucified. Priests should preach for conversion to Christ, and for deeper conversion among his congregation and more serious discipleship.

Rather than being a lamp bearer while the laity are spiritual consumers, priests should be lamp lighters, helping parishioners to learn what spiritual gifts and talents they have and equipping them to use their gifts and talents in the Work of the Church.

Orthodox Christians often point out to others that Christianity is not me and Jesus, but we and Jesus. Our parishes and mission-plants must become much more than places where people go to worship, they need to be real Christian communities. When people feel the love of God in their church community they will invite family and friends to “Come and see.” If they don’t, they won’t. If visitors do not make friends in the congregation within six months they will be lost to the church. Abbot Tryphon notes, “Our Christian faith is communal in nature, and requires us to be actively involved with others. The corporate nature of salvation itself necessitates our interaction with others, for we are not ‘saved’ in a vacuum. The salvation of my neighbor must be as much a concern to me, as is my own salvation...As humans, we are meant to be together, for it is in our lives together that we grow in mind and spirit. It is in community that we learn to love God” (*The Morning Offering*, March 7, 2017)

RECENT EVENTS

ORDINATIONS & NEW PARISHES



On December 26, 27, 28 , 2016 His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia visited the St Nicholas Monastery in Ft Myers Florida.

On these several days, the Reverend Fathers Juan Pons and Nicholas Sepulveda Orenge were tonsured and ordained to the minor orders, then the Diaconate and Priesthood respectively. Attending His Eminence was The Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of the ROCOR WR Communities, along with several of our Eastern Rite Clergy, including the newly-installed Abbot of St Nicholas Monastery, Abbot/Archimandrite Aleksandr (Belya).

We give thanks to Almighty God for our new clergy, and the new Mission of St Michael the Archangel in Guayanilla , Puerto Rico.

We also express our heartfelt gratitude to Abbot Aleksandr for his generosity in assisting us with these ordinations and use of the monastery.





Dr Gildas Meal, a long-time supporter of Western Rite Orthodoxy in England, was made a Reader by Metropolitan Hilarion on Sunday 22nd / 9th January 2017 – the feast day of Hieromartyr Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia.

The tonsuring took place before a hierarchal liturgy at the church of Saint Elisabeth the New Martyr, near Liverpool, during Metropolitan Hilarion's recent visit to the UK.

Reader Gildas has been active within Western Rite Orthodoxy for 10 years and has played an important role in its continuance and growth. As well as being the cantor at the mission in West London, he is also one of the trustees of the charity set up to oversee the English Western Rite mission.

Ad multos annos, Gildas!

New Ordinations & Parish for Arkansas, USA

Father Dcn James Casper, Father Samuel Seamans and Father Dcn Seraphim Byrd were ordained by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia assisted by the Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of the ROCOR WR Communities and several assisting clergy in February at St Nicholas Monastery in Ft Myers FL.

They will serve at the Church of St Thomas in Mountain Home, Arkansas.



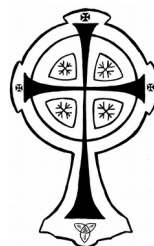
(L to R) Father Dcn James Casper, Father Samuel Seamans and Father Dcn Seraphim Byrd

Fr. Deacon Aristibule raised to the Priesthood



Father Aristibule Adams was ordained by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia assisted by the Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of the ROCOR WR Communities and several assisting clergy in February at St Nicholas Monastery in Ft Myers FL.

Father Aristibule serves at the Mission of St Brendan, Panama City, FL





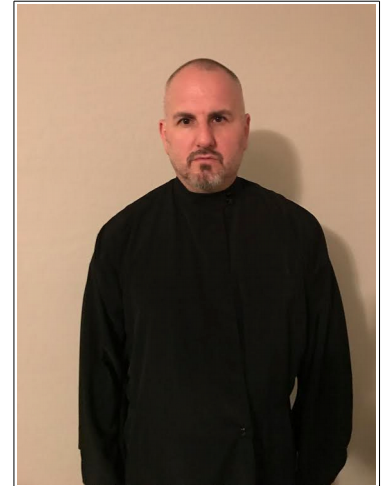
Subdeacon David Johnson of St. Tikhon Orthodox Parish Ordained

Subdeacon David Johnson was ordained by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia assisted by the Very Rev Archpriest Mark Rowe, Dean of the ROCOR WR Communities and several assisting clergy in February at St Nicholas Monastery in Ft Myers FL.

Subdeacon David serves at St Tikhon Orthodox Church, Richmond, Virginia and is pictured with his Rector, Fr John Cook along with His Eminence and the Dean.

Father Joseph Brousseau was ordained to the Diaconate by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia Saturday, March 4, 2017 at the Synod Cathedral of the Sign in Manhattan, NY.

Father Joseph will serve in the new mission of Saint David of Wales in Arizona.



Fr. Joseph Brousseau



Let us all say
ΑΙΙΙΙΙΙΙ, ΑΙΙΙΙΙΙΙ, ΑΙΙΙΙΙΙΙ

The Conversion of the Samurai

Original article can be found at: <http://journeytoorthodoxy.com/2012/09/the-conversion-of-a-samurai/>

St. Nikolai Kasatkin was an Orthodox priest serving Christ in Japan during the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, in the Edo period (1603-1868). Foreigners were distrusted, even hated, and it was illegal to promote any foreign faith. In the early years of his ministry, St. Nikolai was fiercely confronted by a samurai warrior and Shinto priest by the name Takuma Sawabe. Armed with his katana sword, Sawabe faced the young priest Nikolai with the intent of killing him before he did any preaching.

With a fierce look on his face, the samurai stepped in front of Father Nikolai. What business had this man, coming into the samurai's beloved homeland and preaching a strange faith? He would tell this young priest a thing or two! If words would not convince him, perhaps other steps must be taken.



Samurai Warriors in Battle Armor w/ Weapons

There wasn't much Father Nikolai could do. He knew many Japanese were against the Orthodox religion. And here in front of him stood this proud samurai, a heathen, a priest of the city's most ancient Shinto temple, staring coldly at him and expressing his contempt of the Christian faith. Father Nicholas could not simply ignore or avoid the priest. The situation demanded initiative, and because he had been prepared by years of work, study, and hardships early in his life, Father Nikolai was able to meet even this difficult challenge. Showing loving concern, he brought about a calm discussion with the irate man.

The hatred the samurai had felt could no longer hold up. He became serious and thoughtful.



St. Nikolai continues in his own words:

"Beginning the next day, I penned to him the sacred history of the Old Testament. He produced paper and brush and proceeded to take down everything that was spoken to him. My speech was interrupted at nearly every word by objections which, in their turn, necessitated explanations. As the days passed, there were fewer and fewer objections, and he continued to record every thought and name. The process of a man's rebirth into a new life by the hand of God was unraveling before my eyes."

The samurai warrior-priest Takuma Sawabe was, by the grace of God, baptized in April 1868 alongside two of his friends, Sakai and Urano. He took the name Paul in baptism – and the three men became the first Japanese converts to Orthodox Christianity. In 1875, Takuma (Paul) was ordained to the Holy Priesthood, and became the first native Japanese priest ever to be ordained. Father Paul Sawabe continued to serve his new faith as his church grew over the following decades. He was to survive his mentor and bishop Nikolai by a year, dying in 1913.



PRAYER CORNER

Of Your Charity, Please Remember in Your Prayers:

Dom James

Abbot David

Fr. Daniel Ritty

Fr. Matthias & Matushka Susan Brooks

Archpriest Mark Rowe

Fr. Kentigern McCaffrey

Fr. James Rosselli

Fr. Richard Daugherty

Archpriest Bernard Andracchio

Fr. Patrick Lowery

Gerard Trinique

Compline Call

Tuesday Evenings @ 8:00 pm EST

Phone Number: (515) 739-1030

Access Code: 425875525

Visit the Liturgics Page of the Western Rite Web
Page for the text.

www.rocor-wr.org/liturgical-resources

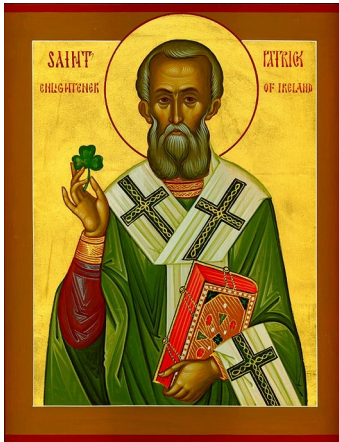
Breaking News

The Moscow Patriarchate has issued an official statement on March 10th, 2017 adding a number of traditionally Western Saints & Martyrs to the commemorations of the Church.

The Western saints added into the calendar of the Moscow Orthodox Patriarchate are:

Hieromartyr Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, and those with him (June 2/15; c. 177)

Martyrs Blandina and Ponticus of Lyons (June 2/15; c. 177)



Martyr Epipodius of Lyons (April 22/May 5; c. 177)

Martyr Alexander of Lyons (April 24/May 7; c. 177)

Hieromartyr Saturninus, first bishop of Toulouse (November 29/December 12; c. 257)

Martyr Victor of Marseilles (July 21/August 3; c. 290)

St. Alban, protomartyr of Britain (June 22/July 5; c. 304)

St. Honoratus, archbishop of Arles and founder of Lerins Monastery (January 16/29; 429)

St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre (July 31/August 13; 448)

St. Vincent of Lerins (May 24/June 6; c. 450)

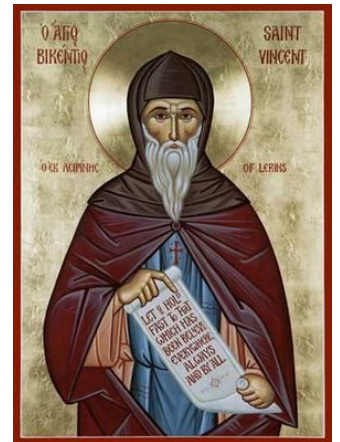
St. Patrick, bishop of Armagh, and enlightener of Ireland (March 17/30; 451)

St. Lupus the Confessor, bishop of Troyes (Gaul) (July 29/August 11; 479)

St. Genevieve of Paris (January 3/16; 512)

St. Germanus, bishop of Paris (May 28/June 10; 576)

St. Procopius, abbot of Sazava in Bohemia (September 16/29; 1053)



These pious Western Saints and Martyrs are commemorated by the Ancient Orthodox Patriarchates for centuries, Moscow Patriarchate has joined officially the Catholic Orthodox Church in commemorating these Saints and Martyrs.

*With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church
Outside of Russia and Ruling Bishop of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities,*

2017 ROCOR WESTERN RITE CONFERENCE & RETREAT



***"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.. (Hebrews 4:14)"***

OCTOBER 9TH - 12TH

Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center ~Wappingers Falls NY

158 Delavergne Avenue, Wappingers Falls, N. Y. 12590-0858

~Further information will be forthcoming.



Any questions, contact Fr Mark Rowe at
fr.markrowe@gmail.com or (941)914-2890