



# HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## Parish Newsletter

RESTON

Future Site: Potomac View Road (behind NoVa).

October 2013

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

OCTOBER—DAY 11 HOURS, NIGHT 13

23 Wed ↓ *St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, "Brother of the Lord"*

27 Sun<sup>18•II•Lk6</sup> 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Honshul**  
*Anaphora of St. James*

*Following the Liturgy: A Brief Special Parish Meeting*

NOVEMBER—DAY 10 HOURS, NIGHT 14

2 Sat *SanktHubertusFest XXI at Hawkins—20 Diner-Donors*

3 Sun<sup>19•II•Lk7</sup> 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Krisa**

10 Sun<sup>20•III•Lk8</sup> 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Lepnew**

14 Thu *Apostle Philip*

### Special Parish Meeting

Following the Liturgy on Sunday, October 27, we will hold a Special Parish Meeting. John McGeehan will update us regarding the status quo of a sewer solution and issues related to our Special Exception which is due to expire in early January. The meeting is to inform the community; no decisions will be taken at this meeting. We can do that in January. We need to mull over these matters first.

### Food Festival

St. Mark's in Bethesda will hold its annual Food Festival during the first weekend in November, beginning Friday evening, November 1. They will be offering Ukrainian, Russian, and Greek fare. One can also purchase assorted baked goods.

### SanktHubertus XXI

Everything is set for the Hawkinses' always-wonderful dress-up St. Hubertus Day Venison Dinner for 20 diner-donors is on for Saturday, November 5, the beneficiary being the building fund of Holy Trinity Church. Cocktails—to the strain of strings—at 6:30 p.m., with dinner

being served at 7:30 p.m., the main course is roast venison marinated in red wine accompanied with mushrooms and sundry veggies, homemade *Spätzle* with sour cream gravy; and a range of desserts (Maria's hazelnut Arborio-rice pudding is a perennial favorite). *Guten Appetit.*

### Man pleads guilty to embezzling from Venice church.

Sarasota County—Monday, October 21, 2013.

The former administrator of a Venice church, accused of embezzling funds, will not go to jail as part of a plea deal. Robert Kondratick was arrested in March for embezzling more than \$50,000 from Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, 700 Shamrock Blvd.

The case was supposed to go to trial this week, but instead Kondratick entered a guilty plea on Oct. 16 to a second-degree felony charge of larceny, court records show.

He agreed to serve two years of community control [that means an ankle bracelet] and eight years of probation, said Assistant State Attorney Erika Quartermaine. He will also pay

O Lord, examine me and know me yourself.<sup>2</sup> You know when I sit still and when I move about; you read my mind even from afar.<sup>3</sup> You observe me when I leave and when I return; you are familiar with all my comings and goings.<sup>4</sup> A word is barely on my lips, and already you know it completely, O Lord.

—Psalm 138

restitution.

If he had pressed that case to trial, there is a good chance he would have been found not guilty, his defense attorney, Derek Byrd, said. However, to avoid the possibility of a conviction and jail time, Kondratick agreed to the plea offer.

Church leaders told the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office that Kondratick requested signed blank checks to pay what he claimed were church expenses. But an investigation revealed he cashed 28 checks made out to cash or to himself totaling \$53,950. Byrd said evidence shows that instead of keeping the money, Kondratick may have given at least some of it away through a "Good Samaritan" fund. He was fired after the misuse of funds was discovered.

It appears that this is not the first time Kondratick has been accused of stealing from a church, the Herald-Tribune previously reported. In 2007, the Orthodox Church in America headquartered in Syosset, N.Y., relieved Kondratick of his duties as priest following an investigation into financial misconduct. No criminal charges were filed in that case.

### Coffee with Sister Vassa #8 (October 25)

You will find the latest instalment at this address: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMVv-mIfC5I>

Let's face it. The woman has something to say. And she does it with charm. And corny humor.

*If you read the article (by Daniel Greenfield, Canada Free Press), in last month's newsletter about the Moslems being "a demographically trending majority," you may find the following article interesting.*

**Daniel Pipes of *The Washington Times* wonders:  
Is a Moslem Russia in the Future?**

The stabbing death on Oct. 10 of an ethnic Russian, Yegor Shcherbakov, 25, apparently by a Muslim from Azerbaijan, led to anti-migrant disturbances in Moscow, vandalism and assaults, and the arrest of 1,200, and brought a major tension in Russian life to the fore.

Not only do ethnic Muslims account for 21 million to 23 million of Russia's total population of 144 million, or 15 percent, but their proportion is fast-growing. Alcoholism-plagued ethnic Russians are said to have European birthrates and African death rates. Their women have on average 1.4 children, and their men have a life expectancy of 60 years. In Moscow, ethnic Christian women have 1.1 child.

In contrast, Muslim women bear 2.3 children on average and have fewer abortions than their Russian counterparts. In Moscow, Tatar women have six children and Chechen and Ingush women have 10. In addition, some 3 million to 4 million Muslims have moved to Russia from ex-republics of the Soviet Union, mainly from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan; and some ethnic Russians are converting to Islam.

These trends point to Christians declining in numbers by 0.6 percent a year and Muslims increasing by that same amount, which will have dramatic effects over time. Some analysts foresee Muslims becoming a majority in the 21st century — a demographic revolution that would fundamentally change the country's character. Paul Goble, an expert on Russian minorities, concludes that "Russia is going through a religious transformation that will be of even greater consequence for the international community than the collapse of the Soviet Union." A Russian commentator he quotes envisions a mosque on Red Square in Moscow. The facile assumption that Moscow is and will remain Western-oriented "is no longer valid," he argues. In particular, he predicts that the Muslim demographic surge "will have a profound impact on Russian foreign policy."

Within a few years, Muslims will make up half the conscripts in the Russian army. Joseph A. D'Agostino of the Population Research Institute asks: "Will such a military operate effectively given the fury that many domestic Muslims feel toward the Russian military's tactics in the Muslim region of Chechnya? What if other Muslim regions of Russia — some of which contain huge oil reserves — rebel against Moscow? Will Muslim soldiers fight and kill to keep them part of the Russian motherland?"

Russia's increasingly confident Muslims, who constitute a majority of 57 out of the country's 182 ethnic groups, have started to use the term Muslim Russia to signal their ambitions. According to Muslim analyst Daniyal Isayev, this term affirms that Islam is "an inalienable part of Russia" and that "Russia as a state and civilization could not exist without Islam and the Muslims." He notes that Muslims preceded ethnic Russians in much of the territory that is now Russia. His sweeping claims for Muslims include the exaggerations that they made critical contributions to Russia's culture and its military victories.

Such talk causes ethnic Russians to shudder about the country's population loss of at least 700,000 people a year as they return to their faith and turn against Muslims. The results include biased media portrayals, attacks on mosques and other crimes, efforts to block Muslim immigration, and the rise of extreme Russian nationalist groups, such as Alexander Belov's "Movement against Illegal Immigration."

The Kremlin has responded to the issue in contradictory ways. Then-President Dmitry Medvedev in 2009 tried appeasement by stressing the importance of Islam to Russia, noting that "Muslim foundations are making an important contribution to promoting peace in society, providing spiritual and moral education for many people, as well as fighting extremism and xenophobia." He also announced that, owing to its large Muslim population, "Russia does not need to seek friendship with the Muslim world: Our country is an organic part of this world."

However, as Ilan Berman of the American Foreign Policy Council points out, "the Kremlin has discriminated against its Muslim minority and ignored (even abetted) the rise of corrosive xenophobia among its citizens. This has bred resentment and alienation among Russia's Muslims — sentiments that radical Islamic groups have been all too eager to exploit." Added to existing Islamic supremacist attitudes, this results in an increasingly restive Muslim minority.

Discussions of Islam in Europe tend to focus on places like Britain and Sweden, but Russia, the country with the largest Muslim community in both relative and absolute terms, is above all the place to watch. The anti-migrant violence last week will surely be followed by much worse problems.

Daniel Pipes is president of the Middle East Forum.

Read more: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/oct/20/pipes-muslim-russia/#ixzz2iU8hp1RJ>

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## Face-to-Face With the Miraculous

Thom Nickels, *The Huffington Post*

I took to the road again but this time headed to visit one of my favorite places, Saint Tikhon's monastery. Saint Tikhon's is an Orthodox monastery about 40 minutes outside of Scranton. The three hour trip on Martz Trailways went without a hitch. One of the monks, Brother Stephen, was at the bus terminal waiting for me when I arrived. We chatted amiably in the car on the way to the monastery gates, and then I was left on my own at the guest house where I unpacked and read until the two-hour Vespers service at 4:30. Dinner followed at 6:30 and then there'd be free time to read, explore the grounds (and the woods) until bed.

Life in a monastery is generally serious business. There is no such thing as "monastery entertainment," no movie nights or daily happy hours. I didn't take a cell phone or a laptop but opted to go natural. It was good to get away from the city and to talk to the monks. In the car on the way from the bus, for instance, Brother Stephen told me about a group of retired Catholic nuns who love to visit St. Tikhon's. These sisters are ultra modern types who don't wear a religious habit, so it's my guess that they are drawn to the extreme traditionalism at the monastery, where the monks wear cassocks 24/7. In any event, Brother Stephen had a lot of nice things to say about these nuns.

Like my first visit to the monastery a year and a half ago, I was the only one staying at the guest house. My large room had two twin beds, a desk, closet, and a bathroom across the hall. Near the bathroom was a communal kitchen of sorts that was also attached to a hermitage where a very learned priest-monk, Father Athanasy lived. Father Athanasy, Brother Stephen informed me, was a former Jesuit Catholic priest who switched to Orthodoxy around the time of the Second Vatican Council. Father Athanasy has a particular devotion to Saint Anna, the mother of Mary. As a result of that devotion he was able to donate a miraculous icon of Saint Anna to St. Tikhon's, although this icon didn't start out as miraculous at all.

Years ago Father Athanasy was approached by an elderly woman who gave him money to spend as he pleased. Father Athanasy decided he would go to an iconographer and have an icon made of Saint Anna, his patron saint. Shortly after the icon was made, it began to stream myrrh (perfumed oil). This fact attracted considerable attention, which inevitably led to numerous reports of miracles and healings after people prayed before the icon. The icon of Saint Anna is located in a small, separate chapel near the monastic dormitory. The chapel is large enough for fifteen monks and is sometimes used when the main church is over crowded due to a St. Tikhon's seminary

event. Brother Stephen was kind enough to show me the icon, taking it out of its glass container so that I could get a close up view of it as well as see the gifts of jewelry, necklaces and rings draped around the perimeter of the icon. These gifts were left by people who had benefited from miracles as a result of prayers to Saint Anna.

If you're not Catholic or Orthodox, all this might sound like Halloween hocus pocus. Some people, in fact, have suggested that the miraculous effects of the icon (or any icon) are illusionary, and that the streaming part is a hoax engineered by priests or monks just to get people to donate money or come to church. "There has to be a rational explanation," one friend of mine insisted. I am at a loss to explain these things to skeptics except to shrug and say that the mysteries in the universe sometimes outweigh rationality and logic. Sometimes there isn't a rational explanation. When Brother Stephen showed me the icon of Saint Anna, I didn't smell perfume or see it stream myrrh, but I did cross myself and give it a kiss.

Two days later I would visit Saint George's Orthodox Greek Catholic church in Taylor, Pennsylvania, when the Abbott of Saint Tikhon's invited me to accompany one of the monks and his visiting parents to a service around the exposition of two weeping icons that have been attracting considerable attention.

For at least two years these icons of the Virgin Mary (Theotokos) have exuded a fragrant oil or perfume like substance that literally flows down the surface of the icon, so much so that it can be collected in a bottle or swabbed up with cotton balls. Sometimes the streaming is so intense it fogs the outer glass containers into which the icons are placed. The service, called a *Moleben* or Prayer Service, is about 40 minutes of prayers and hymns during which the priest places the icons on a tetrapod (or table) and then anoints the congregants with the myrrh. In the past, the *Moleben* has attracted thousands of people, some of whom have reported healings of serious back pain and stroke related problems. Brother Stephen said that there were so many people at the service one year that the local police had to direct traffic in and out of the church parking lot.

The people who attend these services are Orthodox, Roman and Byzantine Catholic Christians. In the Catholic world, there are statues and pictures of the Virgin Mary that also weep. But this is not about seeing the face of Jesus or Mary in a grilled cheese sandwich or the swirl of a Dairy Crème ice cream cone. The media favors these frivolous stories because they tend to poke fun at crazy religious people up to their necks in superstition. There's nothing laughable about an icon that weeps.

That's why when the Abbott, Father Sergius, asked me if I'd like to accompany the monk and his parents to see these icons, I replied with curious enthusiasm. On

the evening of the service, I met up with Father Silouan [=Silvanus], the young bearded monk who converted to Orthodoxy several years ago after finding himself in a rut while attending art school. Father Silouan, who is currently an iconographer at St. Tikhon's, changed his mind about a career as a secular artist when the instructors at the art school he was attending announced that they would begin to teach students how to sell and make money from their art. The future monk, cooled by this emphasis on money, announced that he was not interested in doing art for cash. As a result, he left art school and then, through a serendipitous chain of events, happened to find himself inside an Orthodox church when one of his friends told him that he "should take a look at this place."

Father Silouan took to Orthodoxy like a fish to water and not long after entered the monastery at St. Tikhon's. But for his parents it was a slightly longer road. While traveling with Father Silouan's family, his mother told me that she was at first a little put off by her son's conversion. For many Protestant evangelicals, like Father Silouan's mom, Orthodoxy can seem like voodoo with its icons, candles, incense and blatantly un-modern vestments. Nevertheless, both she and her husband followed their son's path. For Fr. Silouan's father, who was born Catholic, the transition was easier. He told me that following his son was like going back to the Church of his childhood before Vatican II.

Fr. Silouan's mother recalled the initial reactions of her evangelical friends when she told them she was now Orthodox: "It's superstition, almost witchcraft!" some of them replied. Of course, her friends were thinking about the icons, and how they saw them as idol worship, even if they didn't realize that prayers are said to the saint the icon represents, not to the icon *per se* (as an idol). Icons, simply put, are not worshipped. Catholics get similar criticisms when some insist that they pray to statues, not to the saint a statue represents. Father Silouan's mother

found that explaining these things to her questioning friends to be a hopelessly frustrating experience. "This is the original Christianity," she told me she told them. "Before there was Scripture—before there was a Bible—there was liturgy."

The church was crowded when we arrived. There were Greeks, non-Greeks, non-Christians, workmen who looked as though they'd just left a construction site, elderly couples, people with obvious medical conditions, families, children and curiosity seekers. The two icons, in glass containers, were placed front and center before the iconostasis. The priest, in blue vestments, chanted a prayer that elicited robust responses from the hundreds present. The energy in that small church had an upward drift, even a touch of the charismatic, but just a touch, because the Orthodox never get crazy with these things. You won't find hand waving, head rolling, or snake charming.

By the time we made our way to the icons to get anointed from the streaming myrrh, the entire church had the smell of roses. We watched as the priest would switch from one icon to another, sometimes holding one aloft but at an angled position so that the myrrh would run in a steady stream into the cupped hands of congregants. The streams of myrrh were constant. When it was my turn, my forehead was swabbed with the fragrant oil. Some people were in tears.

For a good 10 minutes or so in the car on the way back to the monastery, nobody said a word. We were all still in the perfumed environment of the church.

The tempo changed when Fr. Silouan announced that, compliments of the Abbot, we would be stopping at a Chinese restaurant for a bite to eat because we had missed dinner at the monastery.

We continued to talk about what we had experienced through dinner, feeling very good that we had witnessed a true... miracle