

Go therefore and make disciples of
all nations
Mt 28:19



Allez, faites de toutes les nations
des disciples
Mt 28:19

CANADIAN ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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Archdiocesan Assembly meets in Saskatoon

The triennial Assembly of the Archdiocese of Canada was held 20 - 23 July 2004 in Saskatoon, at the Queen's House of Retreats on the South Saskatchewan River. This small, pleasant venue was most supportive of the "family feeling" which has for some time been a mark of the Canadian assemblies. The host parish for the gathering was Holy Resurrection Sobor, Saskatoon, whose rector is Archpriest Orest Olekshy. Registered were 30 clergy delegates, 28 lay delegates, 35 observers, and 18 youth. In addition, there were various observers coming and going from nearby communities, and present also for the last day and a half were His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman and his entourage from Syosset, New York.

As is often said, "Man proposes and God disposes," and thus it was with this Assembly. First, the keynote speaker, Archbishop Job of Chicago, was not able to attend because of illness (and he was greatly missed!). Second, Bishop Seraphim was not able, as had been previously planned, to complete the process of announcing to the Assembly his nominee for Auxiliary Bishop. His Grace did encourage all present to give their choice from the possible nominees, and these will be taken into consideration by him when he makes his final decision; but in consultation with Metropolitan Herman, it was decided that one more step needs to be taken in the process. His

Grace said that his final choice of nominee will be announced to the Archdiocesan Council at its next meeting, November 4 - 6, in Rawdon QC, in accordance with the Statute of the OCA.

In their reports to the Assembly, both the Bishop and the Chancellor, Fr Dennis Pihach, emphasized the



Bishop Seraphim, flanked by Archbishop Mark and Chancellor Fr Dennis Pihach, listens intently to a question from the floor of the Assembly.

growth which has come to this diocese by the Holy Spirit, as well as by the intercessory prayers of Saints Patriarch Tikhon and Arseny. In 1979 there was one ruling bishop, twelve priests, and two deacons. In 2004 there are three bishops (one ruling and two retired), 56 priests, 14 deacons, and 14 non-clergy monks and nuns. There are 38 active parishes, and 25 missions

and mission stations (16 English language, nine either Slavic, Arabic, or Albanian).

As the Treasurer, Mr Nikita Lopoukhine, noted in his report, Christian giving in the diocese appears to have kept up with this growth. Yet in a carefully worked-out presentation, he was able with diagrams to show that even though the budget of the diocese is almost double what it was in 1989, the fact is that taking inflation into account, real giving is the same as earlier. This means that the diocese has been doing much more with the same

continued, next page . . .

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amount as before of actual spending power. Of course this is a good thing, but the fact that our Christian stewardship is not really improving significantly means that, as the Bishop put it, “we all have more repenting to do in order to live according to Christ’s direction.”

Related to the Treasurer’s Report was a presentation the next day by Deacon Ignatius Rigden-Briscall and Mr David Grier on stewardship/planned giving, a presentation which was scripturally based and very intense with audience participation. Also related to this theme of stewardship were two resolutions passed at the final business session : (1) “. . . that this Assembly direct each parish and mission to embark on and give priority to an organized programme to teach Christian stewardship to the faithful,” and (2) “. . . that the theme of the next Archdiocesan Assembly be Christian stewardship.”

Outstanding also among the reports was that of Youth Director Fr Anastasy (Stacey) Richter and his assistant, Ms Becky Machnee. Fr Stacey pointed out that all over the world, 19 out of 20 people who are coming to Christ are under 25 years old, so why are we not pouring more effort into our youth? There is a rule in church growth, he said, that if you get the young people to church, you will get the older folk too, but this does not work vice-versa. The older ones are the pillars of our Church and very important, but if we target the youth, we will get the others also. Youth are not just the future of our Church, they are the present; and if we do not have them now, we will not get them later. We must begin to work on this, Fr Stacey said. Ms Machnee spoke about what is presently being done for and with youth at both the diocesan level and the OCA level, and she presented a “wish list” of things which she thinks will help in the Archdiocesan Youth Department’s ministry (an annual budget, a youth workers’ conference, retreat assistance, a part-time paid youth worker in the diocese, and a youth representative at diocesan council meetings).

The Assembly delegates were clearly impressed by these presentations and eager to pick up the momentum, because three resolutions concerning youth were passed at the last business session : (1) “. . . that a line item be added to the Archdiocesan annual budget immediately for the Youth Department, the amount and purposes to be determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Council and with the Youth Director” ; (2) “. . . that a Youth Representative be nominated by the Youth Director and proposed to the Bishop and Council to be present at Council meetings” ; and (3) “. . . that an annual appeal [special collection in the parishes] be made to assist the Youth Department of the Archdiocese. The first appeal will be to help youth attend the All-American Council on July 17 - 22, 2005 in Toronto.”

Insurance was an important topic at this Assembly. A presentation on group property insurance for the churches and missions of the diocese was given by Mr Don Hornsberger from Aon, a firm which brokers insurance for many parishes of the Anglican, Lutheran, and Greek Orthodox churches in Canada. He explained how risk works and how it is that insurance companies can offer lower rates to individual parishes if they join a larger group, since a group can create economy of scale and spread individual loss experience across the group as a whole, which in turn encourages the insurer to take on broader risk and also allows for custom coverage of specific things, such as certain kinds of liability. He said that for the Archdiocese of Canada, his firm will be able to negotiate with a single insurer, and that the rates will be uniform, consistent, and stable over the long term. Aon already has insurers who are interested in the Archdiocese of Canada, but they need 90% to 100% support from the parishes and missions in order for the group coverage to go ahead.

Fr Phillip Eriksson of Edmonton urged that all parishes and missions return to him the property insurance surveys mailed out recently. He and Aon and the insurers need these facts and figures to analyze the needs, risks, etc. Once they have all the information in hand, they can begin negotiating for coverage. Fr Phillip also added a strongly theological note : he said that insurance is *not* about not trusting God—rather, it is about loving your neighbour as yourself, which means taking financial responsibility. He also said that liability insurance is probably the most important insurance of all, because we live in a very litigious society, and the Church can be held legally responsible.

Under the matter of insurance also was a report by the Chancellor on group life and health insurance for the clergy. There are twenty clergy enrolled in this programme currently, and it is going well. There is a perceived need for a pension/RRSP plan which, again, will be advantageous to do as a group, and materials on this will go out to the clergy soon.

There were numerous other reports given throughout the three days of the Assembly. Archpriest John Jillions spoke about the beginning of plans to meet the need for a truly national cathedral in Ottawa, one which would have a temple large enough to allow for other hierarchs to visit and celebrate with Vladyka Seraphim. Over the next few years more, he said, will be heard about this. Mr Spencer Estabrooks reported on the remarkable progress of the St Arseny Institute in Winnipeg, which offers readers’ courses and a diaconal programme [see p. 8 for recent news of the Institute].

Protopresbyter Robert (“Fr Bob”) Kondratick, Chancellor of the OCA, gave a lengthy, upbeat report on the many challenges facing the Church today. Among the many things discussed in his report were the recent return by the OCA of the Tikhven Icon to Russia, the possible union of the Moscow Patriarchate and ROCOR, and problems in the functioning of SCOBA. He explained about how intense for Bishop Seraphim are the schedules when he goes abroad in the Church’s service. He described the Holy Synod’s “Guidelines on Sexual Misconduct,” noting that adherence to these guidelines is non-negotiable: they must be accepted by every parish and mission (and Bishop Seraphim interjected at this point that he is very pleased with the cooperative response in Canada). Fr Bob spoke of the work of Statute revisions, with a view to unifying them. He talked of the

need for more clergy vocations and for liturgical order in the parishes. And he urged particularly that as many Canadian parishes and missions as possible get involved in the next All-American Council which will be held July 17 - 22, 2005 in Toronto. “You have a Church that is alive in Canada,” he said ; “dwell on the positive, not the negative. What matters is that you are a family in Christ.”

There was a lengthy and theologically discerning report by Mr David Wagschal, a Canadian graduate of St Vladimir’s who is presently secretary of the OCA’s Department of External Affairs, on the work of that body, of which Bishop Seraphim is Vice-Chairman/Acting Chairman. [It is planned to publish this report, in whole or part, in the *Messenger* in the near future.]

In lieu of the scheduled keynote presentation which Archbishop Job had planned to give, two key presentations were offered. On Wednesday evening, Archpriest Lawrence Farley, Dean of British Columbia, spoke on “Reading over the Shoulders of the Fathers.” The basic

text of this is found on p. 10. On Thursday afternoon, Deacon Kevin Smith, Instructor in Liturgical Theology at St Vladimir’s Seminary, spoke on “A Sacrifice of Praise : Effective Music Ministry in the Orthodox Church.” Both talks were most warmly received.

Over the three days, there was Vespers in the evening and Divine Liturgy each morning. The Primatial Liturgy on Friday morning was served by Metropolitan



At the end of the Primatial Liturgy, Metropolitan Herman gives a brief exhortation to the faithful. He is flanked by Archbishop Mark (left) and Bishop Seraphim.

Herman, celebrating with Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa, Archbishop Mark of Kashira, retired Archbishop Lazar of Ottawa, and retired Bishop Varlaam of Vancouver.

On the evening before this concelebration, at the banquet held in the Willows Country Club, Metropolitan Herman delivered his main address to the Assembly. In it he encouraged all present to return to the kind of fervour and faithfulness to Christ and His Church which he had observed recently in his travels in Russia during the return of the Tikhvin Icon. He urged everyone to pray to the Lord “to renew our lives, to inspire us to reach out to those around us who want to hear the message of the Gospel. No one,” he continued, “is going to change the growing corruption of the world around us except us.” On another note, he said that he is very aware of how great are the struggles of our ruling bishop, His Grace Seraphim. “Within a year your bishop will have an auxiliary bishop,” he said.—*ed.*

. . . Archdiocesan Assembly 2004 . . .



Treasurer Nikita Lopoukhine explained the financial status of the diocese.



Ms Lorraine Grier was the mastermind behind the Assembly's organisation and smooth running.



Deacon Kevin Smith from St Vladimir's gave a music workshop and a presentation on the seminary. He also directed the Primatial Liturgy choir.



Protodeacon Andrew Piasta was in charge of the Secretariat for the Assembly.

**An
Assembly
Album**



Mr Spencer Estabrooks described the vision and work of the St Arseny Institute, of which he is Director.



Archpriest John Tkachuk, former Chancellor of the diocese, preached a stirring homily on listening, both to God and to each other.



Deacon Ignatius Rigden-Briscall gave a presentation on stewardship, with the help of Council member David Grier.



Fr Stacey Richter, Youth Director of the diocese and his assistant, Becky Machnee, encouraged the Assembly to make ministry to young people a top priority in the parishes.



Shown above with his matushka, Donna, Archpriest Lawrence, Dean of British Columbia, charmed the Assembly with his talk on the importance of Bible study.

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Protopresbyter Robert ("Fr Bob") Kondratyck, Chancellor of the OCA, gave a "State of the Church" address.



Lay Chairman of the Assembly was Mr Alexei Vassiouckine of Toronto ON (left). Clergy Chairman was Fr John Hainsworth of Victoria BC.



Mr David Wagschal, secretary of the OCA Department of External Affairs, described the mission and challenges of that department.



Archpriest Orest Olekshy was the host pastor for the Assembly. Here he is shown talking with Ms Katherine Szalasznyj, Archivist of the Archdiocese of Canada. Behind him is the Chancellor, Fr Dennis Pihach.

**An
Assembly
Album**



Retired Archbishop Lazar (centre) concelebrated two liturgies at the Assembly and chatted informally with many of the delegates and observers. With him are Priest Robert Kennaugh and Mitred Archpriest Anatoly Melnyk.



Eighteen young people, some of whom are pictured above taking a break, were registered for the Assembly. They attended some of the plenary sessions but also had their own special programme which included a lot of fellowship and fun activities.



Retired Bishop Varlaam (left) was among the four bishops who greeted Metropolitan Herman on his arrival.



There were at least three events at the Assembly related to St Vladimir's Seminary or its Canadian alumni. Shown here are two alumni, Dianne Storheim (left) and Matushka Larissa Rodger, presenting to Vladyka a gift of the framing of his St Vladimir's Master of Theology diploma.



The ministry of music was very important at the Assembly. At left are three of the choir directors singing "Eis polla": Monk Tikhon (Green) of Yorkton, Mr Greg Fedor of Edmonton, and Deacon Kevin Smith from Crestwood NY. At right is Matushka Barbara Ericksson of Edmonton.



An Assembly Album



Spontaneous music was a very thrilling part of the Assembly's banquet. At left, Bishop Seraphim, Protodeacon Cyprion Hutcheon, Priest John Jillions, Jane Szepesi, and Matushka Larissa Rodger sang the Ottawa cathedral version of "Many Years" for the Metropolitan.



At right, Priest Michael Schaplowksy of Edmonton first sang a Confederate song, and then led the whole gathering in a rousing stanza of "God save the Queen!"



At left, Helen and Simon Waverchuk (Montreal), Timofyi Hawrywish (Edmonton), Wasyl and Katya Szalasznyj (Saskatoon), and Melvin Rystephanuk (Sandy Lake), who is unfortunately behind Katya for this photo, sang a Ukrainian version of "Many Years" for His Beatitude.



At right, Matushka Dianne Kennaugh, at Bishop Seraphim's request, sang two lovely Scottish folk songs.

New Archdiocesan Council is announced at Assembly

At the final business meeting of the Saskatoon Assembly, the Bishop announced names of the new Archdiocesan Council, which is made up six clergy, including the the Deans of each province plus one appointment by the Bishop because the Chancellor is also the Dean of Alberta ; six lay persons either elected

or appointed in their respective deaneries ; the officers of the council, which include the Bishop, the Chancellor, the Treasurer, and the Secretary ; the two members of Metropolitan Council ; and the editor of the *Messenger*. The first meeting of the new body will be held November 4 - 6, 2004 in Rawdon, Québec.



Council members pictured from left to right are Rod Tkachuk (Alberta), Alexei Vassiouchkine (Ontario), David Rystephanuk (Manitoba), Sandra Ellis (British Columbia), Fr John Jillions (Dean of Ontario), Protodeacon Cyprian Hutcheon (Secretary), Bishop Seraphim (Ruling Hierarch), Richard Schneider (Metropolitan Council), Fr Lawrence Farley (Dean of British Columbia), Fr Irénée (Rochon) (Dean of Québec amd the Maritimes), Fr Robert Kennaugh (Dean of Manitoba), and David Grier (Saskatchewan). Unable to be present for the photograph are Nikita Lopoukhine (Treasurer), Fr John Tkachuk (Metropolitan Council), Fr Orest Olekshy (Dean of Saskatchewan), Fr Lawrence Reinheimer (Alberta), Dr John Hadjinicolaou (Québec), and Mother Sophia (Zion) (Canadian Orthodox Messenger).

Diocesan clergy wives meet together prior to the Assembly

For the first time since anyone could remember, the clergy wives held a gathering during the two days prior to the Assembly start, in conjunction with their husbands' Clergy Synaxis.

Eleven priests' and deacons' wives from across the country enjoyed fellowship together. They were also given a presentation on icons by iconographer Yvonne

Romano at Holy Resurrection Sobor ; they took part in a church music discussion led by Matushka Barbara Eriksson ; and they went on a boat tour of the South Saskatchewan River. Many thanks go out to Matushkas Aggie Friesen and Wendy Guenther for organizing these events!—*from the notes of Matushka Donna Farley*

St Arseny Institute Completes first full year

On May 1, 2004, St Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute in Winnipeg, Manitoba, completed its first full academic year. The Institute, which was established in 2003, is under the omophorion of His Grace Bishop Seraphim, and has the blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. To celebrate this blessed occasion, a Great Vespers and Thanksgiving Moleben were served in Holy Trinity Sobor by the Institute Chaplain, the Very Rev Anatoly Melnyk, assisted by Protodeacon Raphael Cole, the Institute's Treasurer.

Following the worship services, a luncheon was served in the Parish Hall. Featured speaker for the evening was the Right Rev Dr Oleh Krawchenko, Professor of Theology at St Andrew's College in Winnipeg, who spoke on the topic "Theological Education and the Future of the Orthodox Church in Canada." Reader's Certificates were given to five students who have completed the Reader's Programme offered by the Institute. Three of them have been tonsured as Readers by their Hierarchs.



Among those at the spring graduation ceremonies were, l to r, Dean Burnett, Gleb Melnyk, Fr Anatoly Melnyk (Chaplain), Spencer Estabrooks (Director), Fr Mirone Klysh (Registrar), Merrie Zubritsky, and Dr Scott Naherniak.

Through the Grace of God and the prayers of St Arseny, the first academic year was most encouraging to the administration and staff. Eighteen students were enrolled in the fall term: fourteen from Winnipeg, three from Canada and one from the United States. The number of students grew to twenty-four for the spring term: eleven from Winnipeg, nine from Canada, and four from the United States.

It should be noted that the students from Canada and the USA are taking courses by correspondence. At present, eleven courses are available by correspondence:

Reader's Program, Liturgics 1 and 2, Church History 1 and 2, Holy Scriptures 1 and 2, Church Fathers 1 and 2, Doctrine 1 and Ethics/Spirituality. In the fall of 2004, the following courses also will be available by correspondence and in class: Liturgics 3, Church History 3, Holy Scriptures 3, Doctrine 2, and Christian Education. In the spring of 2005, five more courses will be available by correspondence and in class: Liturgics 4, Doctrine 3, Canon Law, Homiletics, and Pastoral Theology. Thus, by the end of the 2005 spring term, all twenty-one courses offered by the Institute will be available by correspondence in Canada and abroad.

Currently, there are three students enrolled as diaconal candidates: Subdeacon James Davis of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Sobor in Saskatoon, Subdeacon Lasha Tchantouridze of Holy Trinity Sobor in Winnipeg, and Subdeacon Scott McKee of St Herman of Alaska's Sobor in Edmonton.

Anyone who is interested in taking one or more courses, or the whole two-year program, is welcome to enrol. Those who want to train specifically for the diaconate need formal approval from their bishop.

Inquiries about the St Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute may be sent to the Director, Spencer Estabrooks, either by mail at 150 Canora Street, Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3G 1T2 ; by phone at 1-204-783-5350, or by e-mail at institute@saintarseny.ca. Alternatively, one may contact the Registrar, Fr Mirone Klysh, at 3 Prestwood Place, Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3T 4Y9, or at 1-204-269-3743, or by e-mail at lklysh@shaw.ca

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and other missionary labourers
of the Orthodox Church in America.*

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Holy Trinity Sobor, Winnipeg Celebrates 100th anniversary

On Sunday, 30 May 2004, Holy Trinity Sobor in Winnipeg celebrated its 100th anniversary of serving the spiritual needs of the Orthodox community in north Winnipeg. The oldest Orthodox church in Winnipeg, it was originally started by Russian/Ukrainian/Greek immigrants around 1898. In 1904 the present temple on Manitoba Avenue was built, and the following year it was consecrated by Bishop Tikhon (later Saint Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow). Holy Trinity Sobor was the first Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Canada, from 1916, when the first bishop was assigned, through the time of Archbishop Arseny, until Bishop Antony was moved to Montreal.

Besides the Rector, Mitred Archpriest Anatoly Melnyk, and Protodeacon Raphael Cole, many other priests and deacons from various churches were present for the joyous anniversary celebrations, and for the first time in its history, the parish had three hierarchs serving the divine liturgy together: Ruling Bishop of the Archdiocese, Seraphim ; Retired Archbishop of Ottawa,

Lazar ; and Retired Bishop of Vancouver, Varlaam. The temple was absolutely packed, and those who arrived late had to stand outside under umbrellas. Because of the rain, there was no outdoor procession, but a



Protodn Raphael Cole censes, l to r, Archbp Lazar, Bp Seraphim, and Bp Varlaam, concelebrants at the anniversary Liturgy.

beautiful banquet followed in the main hall of the church house, with over 160 people seated, while an overflow crowd was served in the basement. Also prominent among the guests were the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, the Honourable Peter M. Liba and his wife, as well as the Russian Consul-General from Toronto, Mr Nikolas Smirnov.

Monastery holds healing service

On the Sunday of All Saints (June 6), the Monastery of All Saints of North America in Dewdney BC, in conjunction with the Fraser Valley Orthodox Clergy Association, offered a healing service as a multi-cultural

event, using the various languages of the national Orthodox churches. In fact, the Epistles, Gospels and litanies were heard in English, Greek, Romanian, Church Slavonic, Arabic and Spanish.



The faithful kiss the Gospel and are anointed. The two priests shown in the photograph are, centre, Fr Yohanna Ayoub, and right, Fr Michael Fourik.

It was a joy for all to have His Grace, Bishop Seraphim present for this anointing service, or “maslu” as the Romanians call it. Serving with him were Archbishop Lazar and Bishop Varlaam of the monastery, Archpriests Michael Fourik, Andrew Somow and Steven Slipko; Priests Nicolae Lapuste, Nicu Liatu, Johanna Ayoub and Hieromonk Moses; and Deacon John Bingham.

Many people brought things to be blessed at the service, and names of loved ones to be commemorated. By the time each person had received a blessing with oil from the different clergy, they were totally blessed, with their foreheads and hands well-covered in holy oil. The meal which followed was abundant enough to feed the crowd of over 200.

Reading over the shoulders of the Fathers

—by Archpriest Lawrence Farley, Dean of British Columbia

A pop quiz to begin with : how do you think most Orthodox in our parishes would answer the following question : “In which Testament, Old or New, is the Book of Uzziah found?” Since it is the *crème de la crème* who go to Archdiocesan Assembly, of course you know the answer : there is no “Book of Uzziah”! But many people, I suspect, would think that it was found in the Old Testament, since it was “one of the -iahs,” like Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah. That is because they have no more read the Books of Jeremiah, Zephaniah or Zechariah than they have the “Book of Uzziah.”

Or take another illustration : when the Bishop comes to our parish, the choir sings the hymn, “The prophets proclaimed you from on high, O Virgin ; the Jar, the Staff, the Candlestick, the Table, the Mount Uncloven, the Golden Censer, the Tabernacle, the Gate Impassible, the Palace, the Ladder and the Throne of kings.” During the singing of this hymn, the subdeacons are thinking, “What am I supposed to do next?” The clergy are thinking, “Am I facing the right direction?” The Bishop is thinking—well, who knows what Bishops are thinking. And the people are thinking, “Doesn’t the Bishop look great when his mantia flows out behind like that?” What is almost dead certain is that no one is thinking of how the Mother of God fulfills the prophecies and is the Jar, the Staff, the Candlestick and all those other Old Testament types. That is because they mostly have no idea (for example) which Jar and which Staff the choir is singing about. And that is because they are none too familiar with the Old Testament stories containing those objects.

All of this points to the Great Split in our parishes—the split between the amount of Biblical literacy assumed by the Fathers and hymn-writers of our Church, and the amount of such knowledge actually existing in the parishes. The question then is : How do we overcome this split and become the true heirs of the Fathers?

First the bad news : there is no easy fix available, no short-cut for lazy persons (like me and you). There’s nothing for it but that we must read the Scriptures every day. And not just the Epistle and Gospel found on our church wall calendars, for this will leave most of the Old Testament (including the bits about the Jar and the Staff) unread. We need to start with Genesis and read through to the Apocalypse (the Book, not the event!), at least a chapter a day. This takes discipline, and if you don’t like it, that’s just too bad. No one ever said discipleship to Jesus Christ would be easy. In fact, just the opposite. We are promised it would kill us. If you are prepared to take

up your cross and die for your Lord, then it shouldn’t be a problem just to read the Bible every day.

The question is, how to read the Scriptures as Orthodox Christians? In this as in everything else, the Fathers are our paradigm. We are to read (as it were) over the shoulders of the Fathers. What does that mean? Five things:

Read with humility. That is, read realizing that the Scriptures are alive (the jury is still out on us!) The Fathers read the Scriptures on their knees (spiritually speaking), knowing that the Scriptures were living, and that they would one day be judged on how well they internalized and applied their teaching.

The Fathers read the Scriptures as the Voice of God, and as utterly infallible and true, for they remembered the words of Christ who said, “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of the Law to fail” (Lk. 16:17).

One quote from the Fathers must suffice, from St. Augustine (“St Augustine the Great” in one Greek calendar) : “I have learned to hold those books alone of the Scriptures that are now called canonical in such reverence and honour that I do most firmly believe that none of their authors has erred in anything that he has written therein. If I find anything in those writings which seems to be contrary to the truth, I presume that either the codex is inaccurate, or the translator has not followed what was said, or I have not properly understood it.”

We come to the Scriptures, therefore, to be taught and corrected, knowing that we have all been infected with the disease of secularism. Accordingly, some of the things we believe are true, and some are false. We should expect the Scriptures to confirm us when we believe the truth, and contradict us when we have swallowed error and reflect the spirit of the age. We must read them prepared to have some of our cherished presuppositions challenged and destroyed.

It must be said that it is just here that the world of Academia is little help—at least the modern commentaries I have been reading lately. Though the academic project itself is good (the Fathers, after all, valued scholarship) it is good only when it tells us what the Scriptures mean. When this or that scholar tells you (for example) that the teaching of 1 Timothy may be discounted because of its “Rabbinic exegesis,” you know they are in a different universe than the one inhabited by the Fathers.

To read the Scriptures and then contradict them is extraordinarily dangerous. It is like receiving the

Eucharist in a state of unrepentant sin. Rather than read them thinking that you have the freedom to dissent from their teaching, I would appeal to you to not read them at all. As the Scriptures themselves warn us, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

Read in order to become more holy. St Paul says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We read not to pack more stuff into our heads, but to transform our hearts. The aim of all our reading is to bring us closer to God; to discover how God wants us to live, and then to live that way. We must not confuse Bible knowledge with holiness. It is possible to know heaps about the Bible and still go to hell.

Read Scripture as part of the larger Tradition. The stories about Jesus and the Apostolic instructions to the Church pre-date the writing of the New Testament. The Tradition forms the context of the Scripture and fills it with meaning. That means that if we read anything in Scriptures which seems to contradict that larger Tradition, we are misreading it, for the New Testament and Tradition have the same Apostolic source and cannot be in contradiction.

We must therefore immerse ourselves in the Tradition, attending liturgical services, reading the Fathers, soaking in all that Tradition has to say. This is best done through the Sunday morning experience of the Liturgy. As St John Chrysostom says, “The reading out of the Scriptures [in church] is the opening of the heavens.” In the Liturgy, we encounter the living Christ, the same One who speaks in the Scriptures. Our experience of Him, mediated also through the hymns of the Church, illumines us so that we better understand the Scriptures.

Read the Old Testament to find Christ there. This is the difference between the Jewish reading of the Scripture and the Christian one—that is why we insist (however politically incorrect it may be) on calling the Hebrew Scriptures “the Old Testament,” for it can only be properly understood when we read it to find Jesus Christ. This interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures goes back to Christ Himself, for we read that “He interpreted for the apostles all the things in the Law and Prophets and Psalms the things concerning Himself” (Lk. 24:44). In doing this, we are not reading a foreign meaning into the text, but simply reading the deeper layer of meaning already put there by God.

Read in prayer. Pray before and after reading, asking God through the prayers of His saints (including the ones who actually wrote what you are reading) to illumine your heart. This is not unrelated to all your other

prayers. If through prayer you humble yourself, God will reveal His truth to you—but only if you really seek for wisdom with all your heart. If Scripture is your hobby and not your life, you are trifling with God, and He knows it. Such a trifler will receive nothing from God. As the Scripture repeatedly warns us, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. But if we purify our hearts and seek to bring our lives into conformity with our prayers, God will reveal Himself through His Scriptures. That is why St Antony and St Mary of Egypt could know the Scriptures so well, while the philosophers of the age were fools. That doesn’t mean, of course, that you need to glow with uncreated light before you can get anything out of the Bible. But it does mean that our Scripture reading cannot be divorced from the rest of our life.

What then is the practical conclusion to all this?

First of all, get a good Bible, one with all the books—don’t forget the Anaginoskomena. The Anaginoskomena (meaning, “the readables” in Greek) are the “extra” books in the Old Testament not found in Protestant Bibles. Quite a mouthful—it’s not proper strictly speaking to call them “the Apocrypha” (hidden books), since they’re only hidden if you’re a Protestant. But given the difficulty of saying “the Anaginoskomena,” you see why some succumb to the temptation!

Second, read the Scriptures with a pen and paper handy, to make notes about questions you may have. Feel free to ask your priest about these (why else do you pay him?)

Third, get some good study resources. Modern commentaries (such as “IVP Bible Background Commentary (NT) by Craig Keener; and IVP Bible Background Commentary (OT) by Walton, Matthew & Chavalas. Or (permit a shameless plug!), like mine, published by Conciliar Press and coming to a web-site near you, at www.conciliarpress.com. Older works may also be consulted. Easy to get are the commentaries on Matthew, Mark and Luke by the Blessed Theophylact; “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah” by Alfred Edersheim; and “The Life and Epistles of St Paul” by Conybeare & Howson. Don’t worry if they’re a bit pricey—put them on your Christmas list.

Finally, don’t forget that you are reading the Scriptures not just for yourself, but to be of service for God and His Church. As St John Chrysostom says, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is a great abyss.” Many in the world are falling into that abyss. Our task as the Church of the living God is to help keep them out of the abyss and to show them, by our words and works, the way home. Becoming Biblically literate, as the true heirs of the Fathers, is one way we can help with that task. ❖

News from the Cathedral

The Dean of Annunciation/St Nicholas Cathedral in Ottawa, Fr John Jillions, was awarded the gold cross by Bishop Seraphim at the Paschal Liturgy, and was elevated to the rank of Archpriest.

Fr Symeon Rodger, who has served at the Cathedral since his ordination to the diaconate at the Cathedral on St Nicholas Day, 1987 (just a few months after the amalgamation of Holy Transfiguration Mission with St Nicholas Church), was awarded the gold cross.

The crosses were presented to the two priests by the community in gratitude for their dedication and loving work in the parish.

As the two priests were marched by the two Scratch Subdeacons in somewhat military manner from the Altar to the Bishop's place in the centre of the church just after the Little Entrance, they were seen to throw puzzled glances at one another until they saw their beaming matushkas standing beside Vladyka, holding the boxes with the new crosses. (Fr Symeon remarked afterwards that he had wondered if he was about to be defrocked!)

These awards were confirmed by the Holy Synod of the OCA. The Holy Synod also confirmed the award of the Jewelled Cross (awarded locally at Pascha 2002) to the Archpriest John Scratch.

At the feast of the Annunciation, before the festal meal which traditionally follows the Vespertal Liturgy at the Cathedral, Bishop Seraphim awarded two gramotas and two medals of the Diocesan order of St Tikhon. Mark Steski, former Warden, Treasurer for the past five years, and long-time member of the Parish Council, received a gramota for his many years of dedicated service to the parish and for all the work he has done in keeping the parish finances on track. Reader John (Brian) Ahier, choir director, received a gramota for the long years of excellent work he has devoted to the choir and to raising the standard of singing at the Cathedral.

Nikita and Mary Ann Lopoukhine each received a medal of St Tikhon, with Vladyka's thanks "for their life-long service and witness in the Church, for their building-up of the Ottawa Cathedral from its beginning, for their Archdiocesan service—he as Treasurer for many years, she for helping improve communication, and giving exemplary hospitality—and for serving the Orthodox Church in America."

The photograph, taken after the Paschal Liturgy, shows Bishop Seraphim with Nikita and Mary Ann Lopoukhine wearing their medals. Mary Ann says that they are honoured and humbled by this award.



Bishop Seraphim with Nikita and Mary Ann Lopoukhine and the St Tikhon medals.

Readers will have no doubt heard that the Cathedral parish is searching for a new home, as we are outgrowing our present much-loved temple. No suitable site has yet been found, but the search continues (as does the fundraising). Please keep us in your prayers as we continue our efforts to find a place where the message of the Truth may be more visible and more accessible in the nation's capital.—*Jane Szepesi, Ottawa*

News from Whitehorse

On March 13, 2004, Archbishop Lazar from the Monastery of All Saints of North America in Dewdney BC, accompanied by Reader/Chanter Andrew Bingham from St Nicholas Church in Langley, flew to Whitehorse, Yukon for a weekend of services for the St Nikolai Bishop of Zhitsa Mission.

After meeting informally at an afternoon tea with some of the Orthodox people living in Whitehorse for questions and answers about the Orthodox faith (and exchange of some favourite recipes), Archbishop Lazar served Great Vespers on Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, Andrew led those attending in singing while the Archbishop served Divine Liturgy. The ladies of the Madonna House in Whitehorse graciously provide access to the Maryhouse chapel for the mission to use whenever a priest visits for services. After much too short a visit, Archbishop Lazar and Andrew flew back to BC on Sunday afternoon with a desire to come and serve the Yukon Mission again when the opportunity is provided.

Pieces have been added to the service set at St Nikolai Mission with the donation of a chalice from Archbishop Lazar in memory of his son Elia, and a censer that had been used in mission work by Fr Wasyl Ostashek, Andrew AB, donated by St Herman's Sobor in Edmonton.—*John and Sharon Gryba, Whitehorse*

Deacon ordained in BC

“Old home week at St. Herman’s!” laughed many of the 70-plus family and friends gathered from near and far for the June 5th Hierarchical Liturgy at St Herman’s Church in Langley BC. The occasion was the ordination to the diaconate of Richard René. Richard, wife Jaime, and children Lily and Gabriel travelled across the continent from St Vladimir’s Seminary to this



Richard René (centre) is led to the Bishop for ordination by Deacon Ignatius Rigden-Briscall.

momentous event at their home parish, before heading to their new assignment at St Peter the Aleut’s, Calgary.

His Grace Bishop Seraphim presided over an altar filled to overflowing with a total of eleven priests and deacons. This number included former St Hermanites Fr Justin Hewlett, newly assigned as second priest at St Herman’s; Fr John Hainsworth of All Saints’ Mission, Victoria; and Dn Kevin Miller of St Barnabas’ Mission, Comox. Other clergy concelebrating were Dn Richard’s new “boss,” Fr Larry Reinheimer; St Herman’s rector Fr Lawrence Farley; and Dn Ignatius Rigden-Briscall, who is about to depart St Herman’s to begin studies at St Vladimir’s this fall.

Dn Richard’s thesis was on the topic “The Laughing Bishop : An Oral History of the Pastoral Vision and Practice of Bishop SERAPHIM (Storheim) of Canada” ; the new deacon rejoices in his return to the Archdiocese of Canada. “It was truly God’s grace and blessing that I was ordained at my former home parish in Langley and that all my friends and loved ones were there to pray for me. The ordination struck me as the end of a very long process that began exactly ten years ago, when I was received into the Church as a catechumen . . . There was something truly poetic about the whole [event], and being a poet, that fills me with joy. Of course, the ordination was also the beginning of a long process, one that will end, I hope, in the Kingdom.”—*Matushka Donna Farley, Surrey BC*

Schema monk ordained to priesthood at St Silouan’s

On the 30th of July, 2004, Bishop Seraphim ordained Schema Hierodeacon Basile (Paradis) to the Holy Priesthood in the chapel of the Monastic Community of St Silouan the Athonite at the diocesan centre, Fair Haven, in Johnstown, Ontario.

Clergy present at the ordination, pictured from left to right, are Hieromonk Basile; Fr John Jillions, Dean of Ontario; Bishop Seraphim; and Hieromonk Cyrille (Bradette) and Fr Nicholas Giroux, who are priests of the Romanian Patriarchate.



Our mothers among the saints :

Holy unmercenary physicians : Sts Zenaida and Philonella

October 11 / October 24 o.s.

So far as we know, the first of the great “unmercenary physicians” were women. The sisters, Zenaida and Philonella, were born in the district of Tarsus early in the first century. They were cousins of the Apostle Paul and sisters of the first Christian bishop of Tarsus, Jason. Born into a highly educated Jewish family, both sisters had a natural intelligence and a love of learning. When they entered the famous school at Tarsus to study philosophy, the sisters were instantly attracted to the lectures of the medical theorists.

Their cousin Jason, Bishop of Tarsus, was an early convert to Christianity and a follower of their kinsman Paul. The two sisters learned the Christian faith from St Jason and were attracted by the love and compassion of Christ. After their baptism, the sisters gave themselves over more fully to the study of medicine and began to apply Christian principles and ideas to medical philosophy. They understood that salvation is a healing process, and they were deeply impressed with the realization that Christ tied the healing of the whole person, spiritual and physical, with the presence of the Heavenly Kingdom.

When Saints Zenaida and Philonella completed their studies, they moved to Thessaly, where there were many medicinal mineral springs flowing in the numerous caverns of the Felion Mountains. Here, the Greeks had centres of pagan worship tied to the philosophy of medicine and the worship of Asklepios, the patron of healing. The holy sisters desired to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the great crowds of people who visited these mineral hot springs for healing. Their earnest desire was to combine scientific medicine with prayer and faith and so reveal the nature of salvation and proclaim Jesus Christ to whomever would hear the words of the glorious Gospel.

When they found a cavern with a mineral spring, Zenaida and Philonella built two cells and a small chapel for themselves. Having thus established a community of women, a prototype of the later women’s monasteries, they used their wealth to create a clinic. The pagan physicians not only sought out the wealthy and generally ignored the poor, they also mixed their medical practice with magic, superstition and witchcraft. Much money was earned from the sale of medical amulets, charms, and useless compounds. In contrast, the two sisters opened their hearts to the poor.

Philonella was a patient and careful scholar as well as a physician. Almost at once she set herself to

developing experimental medicine that would approach a scientific medicine. All her life she would labour to free medicine from the hold of magic, astrology, and superstition.

Zenaida, on the other hand, was more contemplative. She was keenly interested in the suffering of children and worked to develop paediatric care. But her first love was prayerful contemplation. So famous did she become as a spiritual teacher, both men and women sought her counsel. Three of her spiritual children, Papias, Pateras, and Philocyrus established a similar men’s charitable community not far from the cavern-hospital of the holy sisters. Monasticism was yet in the future, and these may have been married men who dedicated themselves to the service of the poor.

The sisters’ love, compassion, and openness to the poor and humble attracted many to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did the medical skill of the two sisters become renowned, but also the miracles worked through their prayers established many in the Gospel.

Toward the end of her life, Saint Zenaida became interested in psychiatric medicine. Many of those who came to their hospital suffered from severe depression and other psychiatric illnesses. Zenaida had the wisdom to recognize these as actual illnesses and concerned herself with their causes and cure.

It is not known in what year Saint Zenaida departed this life, but she left her sister Philonella to carry on their work and instruct others in Christian medicine and the faith. After the death of her beloved sister, Philonella entered deeper into the spiritual life, leaving the treatment and care of patients more and more to the students and other nuns. She also became renowned as a wonderworker and reposed in peace at a great age.

The Holy Church bestowed the title “Friends of Peace” on the two saints, because they preached and practiced peace, serenity and charity. Philonella often said that a peaceful and serene disposition could not only aid in healing but could even prevent illness. For her, the source of true peace was the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. The disciples of Saint Zenaida reported that her last words in this life were a prayer for the peace of the world.

Not only were Saints Zenaida and Philonella the first Christian doctors (after Apostle Luke), they were also the first of those saints whom we call the “unmercenary physicians.” Christian medicine began with these holy women.

**Holy unmercenary physicians Zenaida and Philonella,
pray to God for us!**

—source: *Synaxis Press. (Copies of the first icon of these saints to be painted since the fall of Constantinople is available from Synaxis Press, c/o Monastery of All Saints of North America, 37323 Hawkins Pickle Rd., Dewdney BC V0M 1H0)*

Memory Eternal

Nun Dorofea (Mirochnitchenko)

1935–2004

Mother Dorofea (Mirochnitchenko) fell asleep in the Lord on 23 June 2004 in Ottawa, following many weeks of palliative care in the home of her daughter Helen and son-in-law Jeremy Scratch. Hers is a life story of hardship and suffering—as an orphan, as a displaced person during and after the World War II, and as a struggling immigrant to Canada. But it is also a story of dedication to God and of immense love—for her family, for Christ and His Church, and for scores of suffering, needy people she met and served throughout her life.

She was born Dia Lazis in Riga, Latvia on 11 March 1935. An only child, she was orphaned at the age of eight, following the death of first her father and then her mother, an ethnic Russian. After her mother's repose, she was cared for by Helena Adamnovna Yushkevich, principal of the Russian elementary school located at Riga's Holy Trinity/St Sergius Monastery, the school in which Dia's own mother had been a teacher.

During the relatively brief time in the shelter of the monastery, young Dia was blessed to know many people who would make on her a deep impression of lives lived in faithfulness and in suffering, sacrificial love. Among these was the ruling hierarch of Riga, Metropolitan Sergius, who lived at the monastery, was martyred by the Soviets in 1944, and was later glorified as a saint. There was also the Abbess Eugenia (Postovsky) who had managed to save the monastery from the Bolsheviks at the time of their first invasion of Latvia. Abbess Eugenia was also the maternal aunt of orphans Alexander and Tatiana Kaminsky (later of Montreal and Ottawa, famed choir conductors in their parishes). Alexander and Tatiana came to be like a brother and sister to Dia when the three children, under the protection of Helena Adamnovna Yushkevich, fled from Riga to Freiburg, Germany in 1944 when the Soviets moved back again into Latvia.

The years in Germany were ones of great suffering, physical hardship, near-starvation. Finally by 1946–47, all four of them—Helena Adamnovna, Dia, Tatiana and Alexander—were able to make their way to Paris, where the Kaminsky children and Helena had relatives. In Paris there was also great poverty for the Russian community, but Dia was given a scholarship to a Roman Catholic convent school where she excelled academically. It was also in Paris that she heard the young Fr Alexander Schmemmann teaching young people.

In 1951, she and Tatiana followed Helena Yushkevich and Alexander to Canada, where they settled in Montréal. Because of Dia's outstanding academic performance in Paris, her teachers there arranged with the Archbishop of Montréal to have her placed in a fine school which followed the Parisian programme, and where she could successfully complete her secondary education.

In 1957 she was married to Constantine Mirochnitchenko, whose father was rector of Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral, Montréal. She soon became the busy mother of three: Constantine, Helen, and Svetlana (Claire). Following the birth of their third child in 1960, they moved to Ottawa, where Dia's husband worked as a scientific researcher for the government, and where soon Dia was able to begin her

studies again, despite the family's struggling circumstances and limited means. While her children were still relatively young, she earned first a B.A and then an M.A in Slavic languages and literature from the University of Ottawa. She then taught Russian for many years, first in the public school system and then for an agency of National Defense.

During all these years of hardship and privation, and then of child-rearing, studying and teaching, Dia remained faithful to the Church of her ancestors. She loved its beauty, and she was fascinated by its theology, which she relished discussing, even to the point of argument. She was both a lover of the Tradition and a refreshingly forward-looking

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Like Blessed Mother Olga of Alaska, to whom she was greatly devoted, Mother Dorofea was constantly knitting and crocheting warm sweaters, mittens and hats, and even bedspreads and rugs, for people. She never made anything for herself, but gave everything away with love.

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person, for she believed that in every age the Church must reach out and engage people where they are.

Because of this understanding of the Faith, and although she had been a faithful member of St Nicholas in Ottawa for nearly two decades, nevertheless in 1980 she helped to found Holy Transfiguration Mission on Ottawa's Forward Avenue (what a fitting name for the place!), a mission made up largely of young people who wanted an Orthodox community where English was the language of services. She often reminisced that the years at Holy Transfiguration, where many called her the "mother of the parish," were some of the most fulfilling of her life.

After the mission amalgamated with St Nicholas under Bishop Seraphim's guidance in 1987—to become Annunciation/St Nicholas Cathedral—Dia returned to her former parish. But not for long. By the late-1980s, early-1990s, after the death of her husband, she was gone again, and this time to the Russian monastery in Bussy, France, where her monastic formation began.

In 1992, after her return from France, Bishop Seraphim invited her to stay at the diocesan centre, Fair Haven, where she did various translations from Russian for Vladyka, became the "chief cook and receiver of guests," and was tonsured a riasophor nun. On 8 March 2000, the Bishop tonsured her to the small schema (stavrophor), after which she was no longer "Sister Dorofea" but now affectionately known by everyone as "Mama Baba."

Although weak physically and often in pain because of almost thirty years of diabetic suffering and its complications, Mother Dorofea was a person of very strong character. In her mind and heart there were certain constant, never-waning attitudes. She loved the poor—both the economically down-trodden and the emotionally crippled, but she hated oppression of any kind—political, economic, or spiritual. She loved both the beauty of Orthodox worship and the teachings of the Gospels, but she hated legalism and religious nit-picking. Many people experienced her as unconditionally loving and completely forgiving. She was in many ways a living icon of long-suffering, Christ-like, loving behaviour.

Over the years, many also noted that she had her own unique concept of "freedom," which was one of the major themes of her life. When he came to the diocesan centre to do an oral-history interview with her, Archpriest John Jillions was also struck by this theme. In his homily at her funeral liturgy on June 26, he said the following deeply moving words:

. . . last February I had the great pleasure to interview her about her life and the early days of the Cathedral. Her conversation was filled with a wonderful combination of joy, sharp wit and disarming honesty. At one point I asked her what message she might wish to give the clergy. Here is

her answer, but as you can see what she says is valuable for everyone who cares about the Church.

"Put your rubrics away a little bit. You are there, on the one hand, for God, but be there also for *people*. And try to make it so that people will love it, rather than be afraid, in fear of God. Simply to love it. And you can love it, I think, when you feel in it a certain freedom....I'm not saying you should allow whatever behaviour. But it's not behaviour, it's the attitude, it's the feeling. It's the feeling of 'my church,' I love it but at the same time I *enjoy* it. You know, I value freedom more than anything else."

She went on to speak of four moments of freedom she experienced in her life. The first was when her parents died (she was seven and eight). "I didn't realize it till later, but I felt I'm free, not to do as I wish, but free to *be myself*. I'm out of that mold that most parents try to make for you and somehow try to squish you in it...."

The second moment was when she was 12 or 13. She was attending a strict, highly-regimented Catholic school in Paris run by nuns ("we had to bow down and kiss every statue when we passed by") and "I couldn't think of an honourable way to get out." But one day, "when I was somewhere I wasn't supposed to be, I overheard a nun asking forgiveness of a little girl because she was wrong....It struck me that this elderly nun (later on I realized that she was not that elderly!) was asking forgiveness from this little kid who was only two years younger than me....Ten minutes later I was in love with that school and with all of them. I realized that everything that irritated me was like nothing. It didn't bug me anymore, because the real thing I caught in that moment of her asking forgiveness. And everything else had no meaning...The main thing was there and I adored that school....This was freedom from those prejudices of 'not mine,' 'foreign' and I embraced it with all my heart.

"Third was when Vladyka tonsured me. I never thought that monasticism could bring you freedom, total freedom. I can be myself, God has accepted me, that was the feeling.

"And fourth was when I had my heart attack. It was a very pleasant feeling. You don't know if you're going to survive, but this has nothing to do with it. 'How good it is to be in the arms of death,' as Mother Nila once told me. Yes, that was a tremendous moment of freedom.

"The next one will come with death. That's what I hope. Why not?"

—ed.

Memory Eternal

Oleg Wilson

1923 –2004

At the same time Mother Dorofea's funeral and burial services were being held in Ottawa, parishioners of The Sign of the Theotokos in Montréal were serving the funeral and burial of one of that church's most beloved members, Oleg Wilson, who fell asleep in the Lord just a day before Mother Dorofea, after having succumbed to the last of a series of heart attacks.

Sr Stephanie (Smith) who serves as secretary for the parish of The Sign writes, "While Oleg was eighty, and we all knew this could happen at any time ... it still came as a big blow ... particularly to me. For many many years Oleg served as the Treasurer of The Sign. He wrote most of the program code for the Database program that we use for our finances. When I was elected the Treasurer for two years (1999-2000) he spent many long hours teaching me the system and answering my many questions. He took over again as Treasurer in 2001 until this year when I once again was elected. As before, I leaned on him strongly for guidance and help, calling him once or twice a week with a conversation that usually began with me saying, 'Hi Oleg, HELP!' He would chuckle and ask what my question was and patiently help me understand what to do. He was my teacher, mentor and security blanket ... even when I thought I knew what to do, I always felt better running things past him to get his opinion and support. He was a man of very few words but he had the most gentle and kind soul that I've ever known. He never complained about anything but just quietly and patiently helped out whenever he could.

"The very first time I ever visited The Sign back in 1991, it was Oleg's wife, Katherine Berdnikoff, who first greeted me and made me feel at home. Ever since, she and Oleg have taken me under their wing. Though they live on Nun's Island, they always gave me rides home even though I am quite far out of their way."

Who was this extraordinarily kind and gentle model of Orthodox Christian behaviour?

Oleg Wilson was born in October 1923 in Poland, where his parents had found temporary refuge from the onslaught of the Bolsheviks. His family history and values made up a strong basis for his character. His paternal grandfather, a senator in St Petersburg, had placed his father in the famous Corps des Pages, founded by the Empress Elizabeth in 1759. A number of Russia's most famous intellectuals, artists, and statesmen had come from this school. The revolution tore him out of it and

into the turmoil and loss of everything except the traditions and memories of family and country. He met his future wife in Poland and, together with their newborn Oleg, they fled to France.

Penniless, they settled in villages in the south of France. Oleg's father, remembering the idyllic life on the family estate and hoping to achieve success in farming, gave Oleg a passionate distaste for all farm work and a vivid memory of hunger, winters with ice on the wall beside whatever passed for his bed, and the absence of even outdoor plumbing—all of these memories without a trace of bitterness. On the contrary : there was always the overwhelming consciousness of his father's behaviour with everybody—rich or poor, erudite or illiterate, welcoming all with his courtly manner and a sharp sense of humour—all of which Oleg inherited fully. The family lived in abject poverty, and they yet hosted people—true, about as poor as themselves—such as Fr Gregory Kroug, the iconographer, and Fr Leonid Chroll, a French resistance fighter for whom a street is named in Montauban. Spending some time in Paris, Oleg met Mother (now Saint) Maria (Skobtsova), because his father's sister lived with her for some time in her refuge and remained friends with her. So this is the background which gave us Oleg.

He met his first wife, Paulette Lecointe, in Paris. They were married in 1948 in France, where the first two of six children were born. The family moved to Canada in 1952 and the four other children soon came along. Oleg found fascinating work at the CAE (Canadian Aviation Electronics). Paulette died tragically and unexpectedly in January 1986.



*Oleg Wilson and
Katherine Berdnikoff*

Oleg's second wife, Dr Katherine Berdnikoff, writes, "In the summer of 1988, observing this seemingly shy and very distinguished man who had nowhere to go for the summer vacation, I picked up my courage
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and invited him to my cottage in Labelle. He fitted in so beautifully with the Russian community there : common memories and family values, even some relatives in the Corps des Pages, and cavalry songs that they all knew and cherished.

“He then became a fixture of ‘our Sign’,” she continues, “fixing anything that needed to be repaired, without being asked to do so : electrical problems, plumbing disasters, frayed tempers of parish Council Members—any problem brought a cry of ‘Oleg, HELP!’ and the problem was solved. Often this happened without the cry for help. I remember coming to the Sign one evening with Oleg who blushed as he found a note stuck to the door handle of our coffee room: ‘Thank you to whoever fixed this! Masha.’ ‘She noticed,’ he said, for he had repaired the door handle which had been stuck for some time.”

Dr Berdnikoff says that the members of The Sign did not know that Oleg had a similar role in the functioning of their condominium and its administration. People who had locked themselves out of their apartments at midnight or at eight in the morning would phone plaintively : “Monsieur Wilson.... ,” and Monsieur Wilson would get up and dig out the spare keys in the basement locker and rescue them with a grin. When he died their fellow condominium-dwellers hugged Katherine through their tears and said “Nous avons perdu notre ‘sage’.” She is not quite sure what they meant—that they had lost “our wise one”? “our elder?”—but he certainly was those things to them.

Just as people of The Sign knew nothing of Oleg’s role in the condominium, so neither did they, nor his children know that over 25 years ago, he had lent the money that helped a very idealistic but financially strapped man found the now very eminent College Charlemagne. He also stayed on its board of directors. And at his retirement recently, they held a banquet in his honour. Their wreath is still on his grave.

Since his arrival in Montreal he had worked for the CAE, enjoying immensely the challenge of solving the problems that had never existed before : the construction of flight simulators. This also entailed helping train people from all over the world—Russians, Moroccans, Italians, Egyptians, French, people from Algiers and Zaire—and being sent to some of their countries to help install the simulators in place. His remarkable knowledge of English, French and Russian, as well as his talent as a mediator, were invaluable in his negotiations with governments, companies and the various air forces involved with the simulators that he had helped build : Boeing 737, the Concorde, and so many others.

Dr Berdnikoff writes on a very personal note that “When I met Oleg, I had been separated for a number of years from my first husband, George. George had been very ill with depressions and then, finally, cancer, and had by then no one to look after him. Oleg and I brought him to his residence on one occasion, and he was terrified at the idea of staying there alone in his room. I refused his plea to stay with him, but Oleg looked thoughtful for a second and then said quietly, ‘Katya, you go home; I will stay with George.’ When George died, Oleg came with me and led me through all the difficult and necessary steps to give him a dignified burial.”

Dr Berdnikoff concludes, “Fr John Tkachuk said at Oleg’s funeral that we should pray *for* Oleg, but also *to* him—and some of our friends and my son have reported that the problems that bothered them hopelessly had suddenly cleared up when they silently called out ‘Oleg!’ As Fr John, quoting many people, also said : he was a gentleman and a gentle man.

“May his beloved memory be eternal!”

—compiled from the notes of Dr Katherine Bernikoff and Sr Stephanie (Smith), Montréal

Pastoral Notes

On June 5, 2004 Bishop Seraphim ordained **Richard René** to the Holy Diaconate in St Herman's Church, Langley BC. He is assigned as Deacon to the parish of the Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut in Calgary, Alberta.

On July 30, 2004 Bishop Seraphim ordained **Monk Deacon Basile (Paradis)** to the Holy Priesthood in St Silouan the Athonite's Chapel, Johnstown ON. He is assigned to the Monastic Community of St Silouan in Johnstown.

On July 30, 2004 **Priest Justin Hewlett** was received from Metropolitan Herman into the Archdiocese of Canada. He is assigned as Second Priest at St Herman of Alaska's Church, Langley BC.

An Open Note to the Archdiocese of Canada

July 29, 2004

Your Grace, Reverend Fathers and Mothers,
Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I take this unusual step of writing this in order to express my deep and sincere delight and gratitude after participating in our National Assembly July 20-23 in Saskatoon. After more than twenty years of active work in and for our Archdiocese, I'd missed our last two assemblies and the Council Meetings in between. And so it was good to see the faces of old friends again, and to meet the "new folks" I'd read and heard about but never met until now.

Our assembly was a productive and satisfying one—the Liturgy on the last day with four bishops serving with the Metropolitan of All America and Canada was especially moving, even for an "old guy" like me! Hearing and meeting the younger clerics and their wives and families bodes well for the future of the Archdiocese—as well as for the OCA Council July 17-22 next year in Toronto.

My only "deflation" occurred just prior to our voting a for Assistant Bishop candidate, when His Grace announced that none of the four remaining nominees were to be named at this assembly. In the far recesses of my memory, I recalled something in the OCA Statute stipulating that the one nominated by the Diocesan Bishop has to have the approval of the Diocesan Council... and I guess I jumped the gun in thinking that the process which began in October 2002 when the "search committee" was appointed was done with the knowledge and accord of the Council. So, we wait some more... and better to "be safe than sorry."

But, all in all, a good assembly: "Lord, it is good to be here" (Matthew 17:4).

With love in Christ Jesus,

Archpriest John Tkachuk
The Sign of the Theotokos, Montréal

Better start praying !

Someone took a poll about how long the average person in North America prays. And they figured that the average person will pray for one minute a day. You spend longer brushing your teeth!

If you are praying for one minute a day, that's a real lot like not praying. And we wonder about the Church in North America, why it is losing ground rapidly to militant Islam.

If we are losing ground rapidly to militant Islam, maybe it's because the judgment of God is on us, and we deserve abundantly to lose to militant Islam. Because Moslems will almost certainly pray for more than one minute a day.

If we are praying for only one minute a day, then we are going to be weak, and the power of God is not going to rest upon our families, or on our churches, or on our lives.

We need to offer ourselves as true Orthodox Christians to Jesus Christ, and to understand and to say that prayer isn't just one thing that I do—*it's everything I do*. Whether it's in Divine Liturgy, whether it's my Rule of Prayer, whether it's punctuating my days with prayer—*prayer is my life*. It brings the glory of God to me.

God is not reluctant. Prayer is not twisting the arm of the Most High. God, like the sun, beams down on us, longs to bless us, longs to warm us, longs to fill us to overflowing with His glory and His love. Prayer is just a way of accessing that. It's a way of saying "Lord, You long to bless, and I am willing to be blessed. I will stand in the place of blessing, in the place of prayer, to receive Your love." Amen. —*taken from notes on a homily given by Archpriest Lawrence Farley, St Herman's, Surrey/Langley BC*



Bishop Seraphim's Itinerary September – November, 2004

September	1-15	BC Deanery
	17-27	Slovakia
October	5-7	New Jersey, SCOBA-RC Bishops' Dialogue
	8-10	Parma, Ohio
	18-21	South Canaan PA, Holy Synod
	23-30	Byelorussia
November	4-6	Rawdon QC, Archdiocesan Council
	28 ff	St Petersburg, Moscow, Finland

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