

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

Founded by the blessed Archbishop Arseny (Chahovtsov), 1866 – 1945
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Living an Orthodox mission in Canada: Reports from Our Lady of Vladimir, St John's, Newfoundland

Founded in October 2003, in large part, although not exclusively, to serve sailors of Slavic background who land in St John's harbour, the Mission Station of Our Lady of Vladimir had as its first priest Fr Oleg Razumov, a recent immigrant himself. When, a little over two years later, the Ruling Bishop of the Archdiocese of Canada needed to move Fr Oleg to another parish on Canada's mainland, and the Anglican Cathedral in St John's had to repossess the crypt space where the mission parish had been meeting, the Our Lady of Vladimir parishioners found themselves without a priest or a church.

to discuss the possibility of celebrating the Liturgy in their chapel (which is not used on weekends), and, after due negotiation with the Provost, Fr John Mellis (who could not have been more supportive), the Anglican Archdiocese (equally helpful), and—for legal reasons—Memorial University, this was agreed to and arranged.”

Since then, the two subdeacons have been able to hold Vespers in the chapel of Queen's College at 6 pm every Saturday evening (in English and Slavonic), and either Divine Liturgy (if there is a visiting priest) or Obednitsa at 10 am every Sunday (in English and



Some members of the congregation on Palm Sunday 2008, when Deacon Taras Papish of Saskatoon served Obednitsa with them. Deacon Taras is standing in the centre.

This might have discouraged most people, but not the two subdeacons of the mission, Professor Arthur Anastasiadi and Professor David Bell of Memorial University. Subdeacon David says that he “approached the Faculty of Theology at Queen's College [of Memorial]

Slavonic, with a little Greek). Subdeacon Arthur is presently completing courses through the Archdiocese's St Arseny Institute in Winnipeg, and Subdeacon David, who has recently been elected to the Royal Society of

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Canada, considered the highest academic honour in the land, has a new book, *Orthodoxy*, with a publisher; it is due to be published in late fall 2008.



Shown with visiting Deacon Taras Papish of Saskatoon on Palm Sunday are Subdeacons David (l) and Arthur (r).

Subdeacon David reports that “A number of priests have visited us over . . . the years, and all have expressed their delight at the way in which, each week, we transform the Anglican chapel into an Orthodox church.” He notes that they have been gathering more icons, and have built an iconostasis, working on it each Saturday evening. Subdeacon Arthur, a skilled and inventive craftsman, has created a large Orthodox cross, a seven-branched candelabra, and a baptismal font. Many needed items have been purchased out of funds from the Sunday collection. A great blessing is the small but very effective choir, directed by Reader Ivan Saika-Voivod, also a Memorial University professor from a distinguished musical family. The impact of this choir, Prof Bell reports, “is incalculable.” Another great blessing is that Hieromonk David (Edwards) has moved to Newfoundland and is now able to serve the mission during the summers.

But whether there is a priest present or not, the subdeacons report that not only on Sundays but also on the Great Feasts there are Orthodox services (Vespers, Matins, Obednitsa, etc.) in the Queen’s Chapel; even “great festivals such as Pascha and the Nativity of Our Lord are celebrated with all the majesty and solemnity that we are able to muster.” As to the make-up of the parishioners, they report the following: “Our congregation varies considerably in size. On a stormy day in winter we might have no more than half a dozen worshippers; on a great feast day with good weather we might have forty or more Occasionally, we welcome visiting Anglicans, principally from among the ordinands of the Faculty of Theology at Queen’s College, but although we have made overtures [to non-Slavic, non-English ethnic Orthodox communities

in St John’s] . . . we have not, as yet, met with any success.” They believe that it will take a great deal of work, time, and persistence to break down the ethnic barriers. But they live in hope.

The subdeacons also report that they have a fairly active outreach in the local community, lending support to applications for immigrant status by members of the congregation. Letters have been written supporting their cases . . . [but] the federal government seems less interested than it might be—or, indeed, should be—in dealing with the problems of Slav immigrants to Canada.” In addition, “Orthodox students at Memorial University have, on occasion, sought the advice of Subdeacon David, though since we do not at present have an official Orthodox chaplain at the university (we would need at least a deacon for that), such interactions are limited. We also intend . . . to inform the hospitals that Orthodox counseling is available to those who may need or desire it (this would pertain primarily to injured Russian seamen, and Subdeacon Arthur would naturally be the person to contact), although, once again, we are somewhat limited by our subdiaconal status.”

Despite current limitations, the Mission Station of Our Lady of Vladimir, is an inspiration to many, as witnessed by the following example :

Visiting deacon expresses joy In serving St John’s Mission

Matushka Gail and I became proud grandparents of a baby girl, Claire Annabelle, in November of 2007. The only problem was that the proud parents, our son Adam and his wife Sue, lived in St John’s, Newfoundland—not a small one tank of gas from Saskatoon. But we finally managed to get an airline seat sale, booked seats, arranged time off from our jobs, and prepared to go to “The Rock.” Protocol dictates that clergy travelling outside the Deanery advise the Archbishop and the Chancellor in case of emergency, so I contacted Fr Dennis to let him know that we would be away for a week, including Palm Sunday. His response was, “Great! You can do an Obednitsa with [pre-sanctified] communion for the mission there.” He gave me contact numbers, and we said goodbye.

Mission? What mission? I told Gail about the conversation and her response was “We’re on vacation.” My response was “Vacation from our jobs, not from the Church!”

I contacted Subdeacons David and Arthur and told them of our trip. They were thrilled to have a

deacon come to their mission and serve. They rely on visiting Orthodox clergy from various jurisdictions or, when these are not available, they hold weekly reader's services. After subsequent calls to Archbishop Seraphim, to the Chancellor, and to the Dean of Québec and the Maritimes, Fr Irénée (Rochon), it was a go.

After a twelve-hour flight we finally arrived in St John's, where we were met by our son's family. The next day it was off to see all the tourist sites : Signal Hill, St John's harbour, and Cape Spear. It was great!

Then I made the call to Subdeacon David Bell, who picked me up for Vespers at Queen's College on campus. The mission parish has converted the Anglican college chapel into an Orthodox one, complete with iconostas. It was impressive. Then I found out that my two subdeacons and the choir director were all university professors. Who says the Lord does not have a sense of humour? This visiting deacon is a dairy worker who packs sour cream and yogurt by trade. It turns out that almost all the parishioners of Our Lady of Vladimir are either professors or fishermen. I fit right in!

Vespers was sparsely attended (but is that not the case almost everywhere?). Next day, Palm Sunday, was gorgeous, and the faithful of the mission were there in large number, excited about having a service during the Holy Week/Paschal season which would include the reception of pre-sanctified communion.

This was one service which I will never forget. For all my years in the Church, I have dreamed of serving in Slavonic, at least just once. What I got was more than I could have dreamed. I did the first three litanies in Slavonic. The choral response was all in Slavonic. The Epistle readings were done in English in Kievan tones, then Greek, then Romanian. That's the norm in this wonderful mission parish, which is made up of Russian, Greek, Inuit, English, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Moldavian folk.

For my homily I spoke about the Diaconate, giving its history and description, and offering some situations which can occur in the Deacon's calling. I spoke on being a liaison between the bishops, priests, and the faithful. In this case, I was the classic example.

I would like to thank Archbishop Seraphim, the Chancellor, and the Dean of Québec and the Maritimes for allowing me the blessing of serving my first Obednitsa with communion in this dynamic mission parish. Even if my son's family moves, all of us will, I am sure, want to pay a return visit to them —*from a report to the Archbishop and Chancellor from Deacon Taras Papish, Holy Resurrection Sobor, Saskatoon*

American deacon ordained In Ottawa cathedral

On Sunday, 7 September 2008, Subdeacon Daniel Boerig was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop Seraphim, with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Job of Chicago, at Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa. Deacon Daniel and his wife Jennifer are both from Cleveland, Ohio and have been working in Ottawa for the United States Government for the last two years.

Deacon Daniel recently completed the diaconal programme at the St Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute in Winnipeg. Deacon Daniel and Jennifer will be leaving Canada and returning to Cleveland at the end of October. Axios, and may God grant them both Many Years!



At the ordination.

All Saints' Monastery is site Of peace conference

The Orthodox Peace Fellowship has attempted to bring to our Orthodox faithful an understanding of peace within our Faith as well as in the lives of the inhabitants of the earth. We hear the message of "peace on earth" during the Nativity season, but it seems to get lost the rest of the year. Such a message has bearing in our turmoiled/tumultuous political world, but even more within the Holy Orthodox Church. No peace—international, religious or personal—can be found without our first attempting to struggle towards it within ourselves.

Such an agenda was brought forth at the Orthodox Peace Fellowship Conference held at the Monastery of All Saints in Dewdney BC on 13 September 2008. The first speaker, Archbishop Lazar, gave an Orthodox perspective of the concept of peace upon which the further speakers could base their own presentations

Dr Tim Cooper of the University of the Fraser Valley spoke of the complex issue of global warming and of its impending consequences for all mankind, both

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for those who accept this phenomenon and for those who reject it.

Dr Apostolas Apostolides of the Organisation for the Democratic Control of the Military in Geneva was unable to attend because of last-minute affairs, but his paper was read. We heard how the protector can often become the predator and, although we tend to think of women and children as being the chief sufferers in warfare, men, particularly those engaged in the actual combat, are so often afflicted beyond any rehabilitation.

Professor Ron Dart of the University of the Fraser Valley spoke on various manifestations, in word and deed, of the advocacy of peace throughout the ages, citing St John Chrysostom to our own contemporaries. The audience was touched by his sincere description of his family's encounter with his son's presence in the Canadian armed forces in Afghanistan.

Professor David Goa of the University of Alberta and Director of the Chester Ronning Centre, presented a profound philosophical insight into the understanding of our interpretation of reality, authenticity, and of the quest for meaning in life.

As one would expect from such presentations, a lively and lengthy discussion followed. May this conference bring an element of peace to our faithful who can witness discord on an international scale as well as among ourselves. Discord breeds distrust and even hatred, while peace, difficult as it may be to bring about, can lead us to that which our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded of us. —*Archbishop Lazar (Puhalo)*

Healing in Langley BC

On Saturday, 20 September 2008, Archbishop Seraphim was joined at St Herman of Alaska's Church in Langley BC by parish clergy from throughout the lower mainland. They gathered to serve the Service of Anointing, which is traditionally served by seven priests, representing the totality of presbyters of the local church (see James 5:14-15). Joining the Archbishop were Fr Lawrence Farley, Rector of St Herman's, as well as Frs Michael Fourik, Johanna Ayoub, Stephen Slipko, John Bingham, and Justin Hewlett, as well as by Fr Michael Gillis from the nearby Antiochian church.

The assembled faithful were drawn from a number of parishes in the lower mainland. All said that they found it to be a very moving time of healing and grace, and some said it was the first time they had seen such a service served, with the parish clergy gathered around their

beloved ruling bishop. Particularly moving, many said, was the sight of many crowding together beneath the outstretched phelons of the clergy, in obedience to the Archbishop's directive, as the clergy took turns placing the opened Gospel book upon the heads of the faithful.

Afterwards came a time of fellowship in the Church Hall, during which the St Herman's Choir sang "From the rising to the setting of the sun" for Vladyka Seraphim. Before continuing to his next Episcopal appointment, our beloved Archpastor found time to accompany Fr Lawrence to the local hospital to visit and anoint one of the faithful there, who was not able to attend the healing service at the Church. That parishioner's joyful surprise in seeing his bishop was an expression of the joy of all in the Deanery, who found healing through their pastors' prayers and the outpoured compassion of the Lord. —*Archpriest Lawrence Farley, St Herman's, Langley*

Pastoral Acts

27 Apr 08: **Deacon Gregory Scratch's** status at Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa was changed from "attached" to "assigned."

14 Jun 08: **Hieromonk Vladimir (Lysak)** was blessed to wear the Nabedrennik.

1 Aug 08: **Protodeacon Nazari Polataiko** was received through Metropolitan HERMAN into the Archdiocese of Canada, and assigned to Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa.

31 Aug 08: **Priest Richard René** was released from his duties at Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut's Church in Calgary AB, and assigned Rector of St Aidan of Lindisfarne's Mission in Cranbrook BC.

1 Sep 08: **Priest Justin Hewlett** was assigned to the UBC Chaplaincy of the Holy Cross in Vancouver BC.

7 Sep 08: **Subdeacon Daniel Boerio** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate in Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa ON to which he was attached.

10 Sep 08: **Priest John Beal** was received from Bishop Benjamin, and the Diocese of the West, and assigned as Second Priest at Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut's Church in Calgary AB.

28 Sep 08: **Deacon Roman Pavlov** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in Christ the Saviour Sobor in Toronto ON, to which he was attached.

18 Oct 08: **Hierodeacon Silouan (Bourjeily)** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in St-Benoît de Nursie's Church in Montréal QC, to which he was attached.

2 Nov 08: **Subdeacon D Alexander Moisa** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate in Annunciation Cathedral in Ottawa ON, to which he was assigned.



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8 October, 2008

TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CANADA

Dear Brothers, and Sisters,
Christ is in our midst

In early September, the Orthodox Church in America experienced a culmination , of sorts, of a long period of anxiety : the report of the Special Investigative Committee, the leave-taking of Metropolitan HERMAN, the interim appointment, by the Holy Synod of Bishops, of Archbishop DIMITRI as *Locum Tenens* of the Metropolitan See (and of the OCA), and me as Administrator, not to neglect the matters in Alaska, the changes to the fiscal management, the personnel, and the administration of the Central Office of The Orthodox Church in America,, and the preparation for the All-American Assembly.

In the wake of this, I have been trying, as your Bishop, to find the words with which to write about all of this to you, the faithful in our Archdiocese, in order to respond to the questions that must be in your minds, and to try to give some kind of wisdom about the time that we are in.

This is an impossible challenge at many different levels. My days, and each moment of them, my heart, and my mind, are overwhelmingly overwhelmed. To respond in a comprehensive way to your concerns, to respond about the past, present, and future, and to respond, in these circumstances, pastorally, as your Bishop, is difficult in the extreme. As to the past, the number of concerns, moments, conversations, information, perceptions, and dynamics of relationships is, simply, the " expanding universe". The questions, and concerns are so many, and so broad as to be impossible to address fully in anything less than a book. As to the present, my motive for this letter now will certainly be questioned. As to the future, my status, as with many others, is in question. I cannot change these reactions. I also cannot abandon my position as your Father.

There has been a real sense that it would be better that I simply say, and do nothing. But of course, this is, in a sense, the major thrust of your concerns about the past. While I am not unaware of your concerns, nor to your response to what I write here, and, in the face of my concern that this may produce more harm than healing, I take the risk of writing this, as your Bishop, in pastoral response.

In August, when the Holy Synod made a general confession of our weaknesses, and

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failures to act in response to what had been going on, there was criticism that this was too general, too little, too late, insincere, and self-serving. There are so many issues of time, knowledge, communication, perception, relationship, process, and resultant consequences, as I said earlier, that it is simplistic, naïve, and too-quickly condemning to be a healthy response by the faithful. Furthermore, it was a sincere confession, even in the face of the call for specifics, a sincere confession of all of us together, and at the same time of each of us.

What was this "general" confession? I speak for myself. You know who I am. I do not quickly jump to confrontation. I do not like confrontation as a response to life, nor to the gospel. I am, I suppose, a contradiction to the core -- a "Viking", and a would-be gentleman. So my crime is this: I let things happen. I believe in people's being the image of God; I know the weaknesses in the character of Man. I know my own. Is there a need to identify these weaknesses, one by one? How did I respond, in all these circumstances, given that you know who I am, that is such a surprise to you? It is a different matter, however to critique the make-up/weakness of a person, as opposed to his/her integrity.

You must know the expression "discretion is the better part of valour". It is, admittedly, my way, often to a fault. It is possible that this discretion overtook valour, or that it overcame the obligations of my office. Although I do admit the trouble this characteristic causes others, and the sorrow it causes, I do not accept that it means that I lack integrity, or am therefore weak. I accept responsibility, nevertheless for the negative consequences of my actions, and/or inactions, and I will, by your holy prayers, do what I can to overcome the negative characteristics in my personality, and the sin.

There was an obvious need for accountability, and transparency about fiscal matters. This has been responded to. There are larger issues regarding relationships -- the Metropolitan, the Holy Synod, the Metropolitan Council, the All-American Assembly, decision-making, communication about matters involving the life of the Church, and its members, pastoral needs, and processes of conflict resolution. In this sense, the "culmination" that I mentioned earlier, is an opportunity to enter into a God-breathed, important, life-giving process of reconciliation, and transfiguration. This can be, if we want, a great opportunity for dialogue.

And to you, the faithful in our Archdiocese, I voice my lament, not only about my failures, and limitations, but also, and even primarily about my inability to be present amongst you, to be with those that I love, to be more fully father. There is nothing more, whether with you the clergy or with you the faithful, by which I am more fulfilled.

As your Bishop, transcending my limitations, and sinfulness, may I exhort you to work, and to pray together as "members of one another in Christ", heeding the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, which is the theme of the up-coming 15th All-American Assembly:

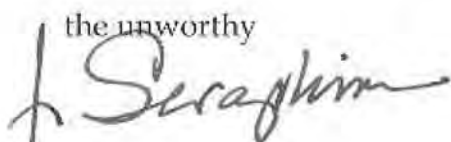
"4:25 Therefore, putting away falsehood, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 nor give place to the devil. 28 Let the thief steal no longer steal, but rather, let him labour, doing honest work with his hands,

so that he may be able to give to those in need. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edification, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and slander be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Lord, have mercy ; Lord, have mercy ; Lord, have mercy.

I pray that I, we, together, will be able to live more, and more in the context of Christ's love, and in imitation of Him. I pray that we will be able to let Him turn us to Him, to His Way, and that we will be able to give our hearts truly, and fully to Him. May the Lord protect us, and save us.

Asking your holy prayers, I remain, in Christ, yours,

the unworthy

+SERAPHIM
Archbishop of Ottawa, and of Canada

Think on these things : Authority in the Church

Authority is a word that a lot of people do not like. When these people think of authority, the words "oppression," "dictatorial" and "abuse" often come to mind. Unfortunately, these are all results not of authority itself, but of the abuse of authority. True and non-abusive authority brings peace and stability.

When I received my commission in the Canadian Armed Forces, I was rather uncomfortable. There I was, a twenty-one year old full lieutenant. Men who knew, trained and verbally abused me as a wet-behind-the-ears officer cadet were now calling me "Ma'am," and saluting me.

These were men who had sweated through ten or twenty years of hard work to obtain experience in their trade and the respect of their co-workers, and they became accountable to me. Me, an inexperienced know-little who by the power of a piece of paper with B.Sc. on it, plus three summers of classroom work, was made their boss; men who had more military knowledge in their little finger than I had in my whole body. I authorized their work and took responsibility for it. I was in charge, at least within the confines of my section. I had been granted my position of authority by those who were in authority above me.

I was in authority because I was under authority. Unless I obeyed my superior officers and did what was expected, I would have had no authority. I was also

responsible to those under me; to protect them and to assist them to complete their assignments. A good officer takes care of his men first and then himself.

Nearly two thousand years ago, a military officer approached Jesus and asked Him to heal his servant. The officer was a Roman centurion, a man who commanded a hundred other men. He could tell his men to jump and they would ask "how high?" He was a man who knew discipline and expected obedience. He was a man in authority.

When Jesus agreed to come and heal the servant, the centurion stopped Him and told Him it would be unnecessary for Him to come to the house ; all He had to do was to say the word and the servant would be healed. The centurion went on to say that he recognized the authority in Jesus to do this because he, the centurion, was also a man under authority. Note, he did not say *in* authority, he said *under* authority.

He knew he only had authority because he was under authority, just as Jesus had authority only because He was under the ultimate authority of God the Father. Being under authority did not make Jesus less than His Father ; it meant He was in submission to His Father.

Our problem today, is that we are too quick to view authority from a hierarchal position, a worldly position,
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where those with more authority are somehow considered superior to those with less. Biblical submission and authority does not imply either inferiority or superiority.

Having authority, means being brave enough to delegate the authority and taking responsibility for the results. Authority, used properly, should be a co-operative venture, where different people assume different roles, all roles being equally important to the project at hand and recognized as such. Yes, some one person is designated to make decisions, but if all are truly working for the Lord, then there should be no resentment from those who do not make those decisions.

Being under authority does not mean giving up your opinion and identity. Rather, it brings fulfilment of your potential as you co-operate and do your part towards completion of a goal. Being under authority also brings you greater authority and responsibility. As our Lord said, show yourselves to be faithful in small things and you will be given charge over many.

Authority provides structure, and structure provides stability in all areas of our lives. Without authority, without voluntary submission, without accountability and responsibility we build a self-centred world without laws, without conscience and without compassion.

In short, we build a world without God, the source of all authority. This is a world where we look out for “number one,” where “if it feels good, do it,” where there are no absolute truths and where anarchy reigns.

Jesus said, “He that would be greatest among you must be the servant of all.” Many want authority, but only those who submit to being under authority will have true authority, the authority that God gives. —*Patricia Bartlett, St Aidan’s Mission, Cranbrook BC*

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

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Our Orthodox Old Testament : The Septuagint

On the weekend of September 18-20, 2008, Trinity Western University hosted a conference celebrating the publication of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) by Oxford University Press. Several translators and other internationally renowned scholars in the field of Septuagint studies presented papers explaining some of the conclusions they had come to as a result of this translation effort. But before I can present some of their conclusions, I must provide most of my readers with a little background.

What is the Septuagint, and why is it important to Orthodox Christians?

The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, a translation that began in the 3rd century before Christ. This Greek Old Testament was the version of the Old Testament that was most often quoted by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament, and the version of the Old Testament quoted overwhelmingly by the Church Fathers (East and West) until Jerome’s Latin translation in the 5th century. After the 5th century, the Septuagint has continued until today to be the official version of the Old Testament for the Orthodox Churches.

The Church considers this translation to be an inspired translation of the Old Testament, as did all early Church Fathers both East and West. This is important because there are significant differences between the current Hebrew version of the Old Testament, called the Masoretic text, and the Septuagint. Unfortunately almost all Bibles published in English are based on the Jewish, Masoretic text (in fact, scholars often refer to this text as “the Jewish Bible”). To illustrate the significance of differences between these two versions of the Old Testament, I will present here only two examples of the hundreds of important differences.

Isaiah 7:14 is the famous prophecy of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary. The Jewish, Masoretic text says not that a virgin will give birth, but that a “young woman” will give birth. However the Septuagint says that a biological “virgin” will give birth. For theological reasons, many Protestant translations of the Masoretic text change “young woman” to “virgin,” but the Hebrew is clearly not the word for biological virgin, but merely young woman.

An example that can be clearly seen in almost all English Bibles is Isaiah 29:13, “Their reverence for me has become routine observances of the precepts of men” (NAB). This is quite different from the Septuagint, which

. . . *The Septuagint* . . .

Jesus quotes in Mark 7:7, “In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine human precepts” (NAB), which is very similar to the Septuagint version of Isaiah 29:13, “in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts and teachings” (NETS). According to Jesus and the Septuagint, the problem is their vain worship *and* their teaching human doctrines, while according to the Masoretic text, the problem has just to do with worship.

These differences between the Bible that the early Christians used and the Bible the Jews used gave rise over the centuries to a sort of stalemate between the Jews and the Christians. The Jews accused the Christians of perverting the text while the Christians accused the Jews of the same. The earliest record of this “You changed it!” “No! You changed it!” argument is found in St Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. However, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other tools of modern scholarship, a sort of answer to this conundrum is emerging.

Conference conclusions

The first and overwhelming consensus of the conference participants (including secular, Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars) was that the Septuagint must be understood as an almost interlinear translation of an original Hebrew source. That is, because it can be shown that the Septuagint is an almost word for word translation of the Hebrew text in the places where it agrees with the Masoretic text, it should be assumed that the places of disagreement followed the same pattern ; consequently one must conclude that the Hebrew text from which the Septuagint was translated was different from the Hebrew Masoretic text of today. Further, in those spots that differ, the Greek of the Septuagint follows a Hebrew idiom. If the Greek translators were changing the text, one would expect the changed parts to be Greek sounding, not Hebrew sounding. However, this is not the case.

One Jewish scholar, Dr Leonard Greenspoon of Creighton University, made the following argument. Based on the evidence of the Septuagint and other ancient texts and the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint must be understood as an almost literal, word for word, translation of a very early version of the Hebrew scripture. He also concludes, based on the same evidence, that there were several different (some significantly different) versions of the Jewish scripture in use in the few centuries before and after Christ, or the Common Era as he calls it.

This makes sense to me. At the time of Jesus there were at least seven (some say nine) competing sects of Judaism in Palestine. That each had its own different version of the scripture can easily be inferred from the

Gospels and Acts, where some theological differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees are laid out. Moreover, the Dead Sea Scrolls attest to many, many variants among the texts. Therefore, while the “interlinear” nature of the Septuagint clears the Christians of the charge of tampering with the text, we need not accuse the Jews of intentionally changing it either. In putting together what became the official Hebrew text of the Jewish scripture during the six hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews merely chose from the Hebrew texts available to them versions that did not so easily support the Christians’ view of things. That is, they chose Hebrew texts that did not agree with the earlier Hebrew text on which the Septuagint is based.

Another scholar, Dr Melvin Peters of Duke University (a person of “undeclared” religious affiliation), pointed out that among modern scholars, there has been an unwarranted bias for the Hebrew Masoretic text as the “real” version of the Jewish scriptures (*i.e.*, the Christian Old Testament). Using a crude but biblical analogy he said it is “as though the Septuagint were a concubine to be consulted in moments of stress, but not worthy to be presented in public as the legal wife.” He clearly got the point across to the audience. The evidence is overwhelming that very little but religious bias has caused the Masoretic text to be the preferred text of Bible translators over the Septuagint text. Dr Peters went as far as to claim that the Septuagint text is based on a Hebrew text that is almost one thousand years older than the Masoretic text.

So what?

The Orthodox Church has always held the Septuagint to be the authoritative version of the Old Testament ; unfortunately until this year (2008), the only English version of the Septuagint was translated in the 1840s and is not widely available. Now that the legitimacy of the Septuagint as a reliable “interlinear” translation of a very early Hebrew text is becoming broadly recognized, perhaps more translations will become available in modern language. The only two contemporary English translations that I know about were both published this year. They are the St Athanasius Academy Translation (SAAT) of the *Orthodox Study Bible* published by Thomas Nelson and the NETS published by Oxford University Press. Of the two, the SAAT version is by far the most easily readable, while the NETS intentionally preserves much of the interlinear awkwardness of the Greek Septuagint. I suggest that every English-speaking Orthodox Christian buy and read at least the *Orthodox Study Bible* (www.conciliarpress.com), and those who are serious about Bible study should read both. The Septuagint is, after all, our Bible. —Fr Michael Gillis, pastor, Holy Nativity Orthodox Mission (Antiochian), Langley BC

What is blessable as an icon?

One of the great difficulties that I believe the Orthodox Church has always had is control over her iconographers. More than ever, especially today, icons are being painted without understanding, and people who are not steeped in the Orthodox iconographic tradition are taking over our sacred art, teaching and painting, and their icons are ending up on our altars to be blessed, or worse, in our churches to be venerated and prayed before. The Church has attempted to deal with this situation. For example, the Hundred Chapters Council suggested that bishops and metropolitans appoint someone to be an overseer of icon studios and iconographers, to make sure that the images being produced adhered to the iconographic tradition. Yet in the 21st Century, the situation is worse than ever.

Almost anyone can become an iconographer now—regardless of talent, religious affiliation, or belief : all one really needs now is an internet connection and access to the *Technique of Icon Painting* or *A Brush with God*, and suddenly, one is an iconographer. Or take a course : a one- or two-week course in iconography is offered in many places in North America, or in many of the lay academies and iconography clubs in Finland, not to mention the New Valamo Lay Academy. Granted, these courses do a great service, but one course does not an iconographer make, and we do a great disservice to the church and her tradition by not being more concerned with what is being produced.

While I was recently staying in New Valamo Monastery in Finland, a woman from the city of Tampere brought a suitcase-load of icons to the monastery to be blessed. I am not sure if all the icons were painted by her, or if she was bringing them on behalf of her iconography club, but she brought twelve icons with her. Somehow, in Finland, it has come about that having the New Valamo Monastery stamp, saying that the icon was blessed on the altar of New Valamo Monastery, is the sign that you have arrived as an iconographer, that you have become an iconographer. It is the “seal of approval.”

Unfortunately, when all of these icons were laid out on the proskedia table and scrutinized, with much discussion between Igumen Sergei and myself, only four of the twelve were deemed blessable. The remaining icons were not blessed, for various reasons : some because of incorrect inscriptions, some because of composition, some because they were icons of saints not recognized by the Orthodox Church, some because of misspellings. It was truly sad to see, as the iconographer had a budding talent, but to bless these works and confer upon them the seal of blessing would be wrong, would have not done the Church or the iconographer any service. For each icon that was rejected, we sent back a note with an explanation of why

the work could not be blessed, not wanting to quench the spirit, but to encourage.

Where we run into a problem today is that there is not the mechanism in our Church to judge what is being produced and reproduced. The priest in the church today has the final say as to what is blessable and what is not, and this leads to problems as well. By and large, our priests are not educated in iconology. When many of us were in seminary (I am speaking specifically about my time in St Vladimir’s Seminary in Crestwood NY), there were no classes offered on iconology. The basic instructions on what an icon is and what constitutes an icon are not taught to our seminarians, and these graduates are being priested and in turn are left to instruct and to judge what is blessable and what is not. No matter how hard they try, metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops cannot be “everywhere present and filling all things” and, unfortunately, are not all aware of what makes an icon. How can we change the situation?

First and foremost, our priests must be educated in iconology. There is no excuse for this not being a mandatory course in our seminaries. Seminarians need to be educated by an iconologist who is also an iconographer knowledgeable in the tradition, who is more concerned about being an iconographer than being an artist.

Second, courses on iconology need to be given in our parishes. I make the distinction between iconography and iconology : it is not necessary that the technique of icon painting be taught, but it is necessary that the meaning of icons be taught to everyone. Too often our parishioners, cradle-born Orthodox and converts alike, are in the dark, left to their own devices as to understanding our sacred art. Too many times have I heard spurious explanations for the most simple elements that are in icons. And unfortunately in the Church, we have a tendency to over-mystify our sacred art as opposed to explaining what it truly is.

Third, besides the overall education of clergy and laity, it is also important to use the following checklist. It was developed while I was in New Valamo Monastery with the help of one of the best-known iconographers in Finland, Bishop Arseni of Joensuu. This checklist has all of the reasons why an icon would be considered unblessable by the Church. This checklist is meant to be photocopied or typed up, and brought to our altars for the priest to use, and it is also meant to be used by all iconographers to make sure that their icons meet the standards of the Orthodox Church. When an icon that causes pause is brought to the altar, the priest can go through the checklist and check off which boxes are appropriate, and return the unblessed icon to the iconographer. I was asked once how many of the boxes would need to be checked off for an icon to not be blessed, and the answer is “only one.”

. . . Iconography / Iconology . .

This work cannot be blessed and is not considered an icon because:

- ❑ *It is a fragment of an icon, not a whole icon.*
- ❑ *It is a fragment of a wall painting.*
- ❑ *It does not have a feast day particular to it.*
- ❑ *It does not have a name or the symbols of the name on it.*
- ❑ *This is a sketch for an icon and not an actual icon.*
- ❑ *There is a misspelling in the text.*
- ❑ *The saint in the icon is not an Orthodox saint.*
- ❑ *The inscription on this icon is incorrect.*
- ❑ *This is not a canonical icon.*

These points need some explanation. It is marvellous that we live in a society and a culture where we have so much print media available to us. I have many, many books on icons, from many different places in the world. I can take a book down and look at all the photographs and details of photographs of icons, and if I am not careful, I can mistake a detail for an appropriate model to paint. Unfortunately, this sometimes happens: either iconographers paint, or those who make print icons print, only details of icons and not the whole thing. A detail cannot be considered an icon, just as a photograph of a left eye cannot be considered a portrait of a person. The same is true for life icons: when we have reproductions of the life of a saint, say, for example, the familiar icon of St Herman of Alaska and the details of his life, if we take one part of that life icon, for example, St Herman's stopping the tidal wave, or his body's being taken from Spruce Island on a helicopter, those details cannot stand by themselves as icons. In the context of the life icon, they are perfectly acceptable, but taken out of context, they cannot be considered icons.

Similarly, fragments of wall paintings do not make panel icons. There are things that are represented on the walls of churches that—in the context of the church decoration and in the context of the church's iconographic programme—are correct, as the decoration of the church proclaims the whole history of our salvation. Taking a detail from the walls out of context, however, causes that image to cease being an icon.

One simple definition of an icon is that it is a religious painting, in a variety of media, that has a feast day particular to it. There are events that are represented in wall paintings, for example, the miraculous draft of fish, that does not have a feast day. Or again, citing life icons, there is no feast day of St Herman's stopping

the tidal wave, just as there is no feast day of St George's being tortured. Again, taking these elements out of context causes them to cease to be icons. The one exception to this point are icons of Christ. There is only one feast day that I know of on our calendar that is dedicated to an icon of Christ, and that is for the icon of the Face Made without Hands, on August 16. All other icons of Christ are without feast days.

To further clarify my definition of an icon, I usually add that the figures, or the main figures, have haloes, and that there are their names, or symbols of the names on the icon. If an icon of Christ or the Theotokos comes to the altar without their names, or Christ without a cross in his halo; or if a feast is represented without the name of the feast, and the main characters without haloes or their names, the icon is unbleisable. Some exceptions occur: most event icons that contain all twelve apostles do not give them all haloes and names, only the "stars" of the icon have them, to borrow from dramatic terminology. Those in supporting roles are typically represented without haloes and names.

The fifth point is something that is necessary, as I have seen in my time in New Valamo Monastery. Sometimes framed drawings for icons came across the altar to be blessed. Even though they have the potential to inspire an icon, they are not icons themselves. Many times simple line drawings are inscribed on wood using a laser: does the fact that the drawing is now on wood make it an icon? Pardon the pun, but we have to draw the line somewhere.

The sixth point is one that I experienced many times in my vocation as an iconographer. I have painted icons for people whose language of prayer was not English. I have painted icons with inscriptions in Finnish, Swedish, German, Slavonic, English, Danish, and so on. And several icons I have had sent back from the altar to have the inscriptions corrected. If an icon is a proclamation of the truth of our faith, then is it not too much to expect that the spelling be correct?

The seventh point is a contentious one. So many people today, of different faiths, paint icons. And many people bring them to Orthodox churches to have them blessed. Unfortunately, not all of the saints represented are Orthodox Saints. There is also a great danger in using the internet if you are looking for proper models, because some who call themselves iconographers have painted, in iconographic styles, saints of all different faiths, and even people that no church has recognised as saints. Even if an image is done in a Byzantine iconographic style, this does not mean that it is an icon that is bleisable on an Orthodox altar. The date 1054 AD is our cut off mark for sharing saints with the Roman Catholic Church, or among some historians, 1204 AD (the Fourth Crusade), or even 1453 AD (the fall of Constantinople) Whatever the date cited as the official one for the schism between East and West, those

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dates need to be respected, no matter how fond we are of various holy people of other traditions. This is not to say that we cannot have devotion to these saints, or even sacred images of them, but what it does say is that these icons should not be blessed on our altars.

Point eight is a very interesting one. One of the icons that was brought to the New Valamo Monastery altar was an icon of the Nativity. What the iconographer had written as the inscription for the icon was not “The Nativity of Christ” but “Christ is Born, Glorify.” Also, what the iconographer had used as the model for the icon was a Christmas card. This point is clear : iconographers must use the traditional inscriptions for their icons, be they event icons or the epithets used for saints. The amount of research that one sometimes must do in order to make sure that the epithet is correct can be enormous, but just as making sure your model is within the iconographic tradition, this is also something each iconographer must do.

The last point is one that is hard to explain. As was pointed out to me by Bishop Arseni of Joensuu, checklist points one to eight are tangible : one can usually show on the panel itself what it is that prevents the icon from being blessed. The last point, however, is intangible. Again, I will blame print media (just because it is printed in a book of icons does not mean it is a canonical icon), and those iconographers who have gone before us who may have been more concerned with being artists than iconographers. Over time, icons have been produced that do not conform to the canon of iconography. For example, there is an icon of Christ the Blessed Silence. It is an image of Christ shown as an angel. It fits into the realm of the dogmatic icon, and yet it is not canonically an icon. Another type of icon that fits into this category is icons of God the Father. Even though the Hundred Chapters Council condemned the image, one can find an icon of God the Father over the royal doors in New Valamo Monastery. There is also an image of the Paternity inside the main gates of the Sergeiev-Trinity Lavra in Sergeiev Posad, home of the Moscow Spiritual Academy and its School of Iconography. These are just two examples

of hundreds of non-canonical icons out there : we must be discerning in how best to judge what is canonical.

At the same time we also must be very careful about all these listed points, because iconography is a *living* tradition. The Orthodox Church is not a museum of all that is ancient, but a living, vibrant Church. So too is our iconography : new saints are being canonized all the time, and new iconography is being created all the time to express the truth of the faith. One rallying cry for iconographers is that we are to imitate, not innovate, and for the most part, this is something I agree with wholeheartedly. But that does not mean there is no creativity in the bounds of the iconographic tradition. The Church does recognise new iconography : it just takes time. What is not canonical or accepted by the Church eventually disappears—or so it did once, before the advent of the internet and mass media publications.

This list does not say anything about *style*. It is difficult as a teacher of iconography, especially in this present age, to criticize anyone’s work. Perhaps that is why I no longer teach iconography classes. However, one must be willing to say what is good and what is not. Otherwise, the iconographer will not learn and grow. Unfortunately, when it comes down to matters of taste, if all the positive elements of this checklist are present, it needs to be up to the priest to say something. From my own experience, I am thankful for my parish priest’s admonishments, no matter how hard it was to hear at the time, that I should stop painting icons and get some proper instruction, as he could see that my work was going down the wrong path, and not being done for the glory of God.

I hope that this article is a help to iconographers, clergy, and laity alike. For the sake of the Church and her sacred art, we must educate ourselves and be diligent in the preservation of her Traditions. This is simply a beginning : as I study and paint, I realise how little I truly know and how much more there is to know about iconography. Just as being a Christian is a life-long journey, so too is the proper understanding of our Church’s sacred art.
—Hieromonk Vladimir (Lysak), iconographer

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