

Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Cathedral
107th Annual Meeting
14 November, 2004
Report of The Dean

Beloved in Christ:

As I prepare my twenty-first annual report, nothing stands out more than the ways in which our Parish has changed over the past two decades. Our Community has more than doubled in size. Our median age has dropped by forty years. Our Temple has been beautified, our Rectory preserved and our old Parish Hall, completely replaced. We have played an important part in the revival of our historical neighborhood as well as the growth and spread of Holy Orthodoxy in Colorado. We are known all over the country as a success story, the bright spot among old urban parishes.

On the other hand, a few things seem never to change. We still have to beg some parents to get their children to Liturgy and Church school regularly. There is still frustration about the unwillingness of some people to prepare a coffee hour once in a while and to financially support our weekly luncheons. And, the Parish Council members continue to give themselves headaches and me ulcers trying to figure out how to meet our month-by-month budget with inadequate and inconsistent donations.

It is somewhat saddening to me, personally, that, after having preached and taught here for twenty years and having worked successfully to assist the O.C.A., our Diocese and many of our parishes to achieve greatly improved levels of financial responsibility, a sizable minority of our parishioners continue to fail to keep the Biblical instruction to make their weekly offerings to Our God as a proportion or percentage of their income: of His Blessings to them.

This year, over my protests, the Parish Council has proposed a budget with an 8% raise in my support. I recounted to them a time in the 1980s when the annual meeting voted a 20% increase in my salary and Matushka and I refused to take it rather than place a burden upon the parish even though, at the time, our family was in very tight financial circumstances. While it is true that I am, in all likelihood, within my last decade before retirement and that our current pension level will not be sufficient to provide Matushka and me with a roof over our heads and adequate support when that time comes. And while it is also true that the next Priest will, almost certainly not have the desire to work outside of the parish as I have done all of these years, still, it would certainly be more pleasant if this issue arose at a time when our giving was in surplus of our operating budget.

On the bright side, our people once again, have been most generous in charitable giving. In the last 12 months we sent \$1,000 to rebuild a senior housing facility destroyed by fire at the Varatic Monastery. We sent in excess of \$3,000 to the Monastery in Kaluga where our donations to the orphanage have totaled over \$20,000 in the last seven years. We sent money to build a Church in Transylvania, to help a young woman in Bucharest and another in Smolensk to pay medical bills. We have supported our nuns at Lake George and our Seminarian at St. Tikhon's, provided Christmas presents for children in Serbia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and other lands and given some other small gifts to Orthodox elderly people overseas. In all, we have given about \$9,600 to help those outside of our parish. It is ironic that this is almost exactly the total of our present budgetary deficit but we can certainly not expect our people ever to understand the principle of tithing if we are taking bread out of the mouths of widows, nuns and orphans to pay our utility bills.

In the past year we launched our first Annual Orthodox Food Festival. It was a wonderful event, which involved many of our people, brought in many visitors to our parish and produced a favorable reaction all over the city. We had many donations and start-up costs this year, and so it is not possible to apply any of our income to the 2004 budget but we have set aside sufficient funds for next year's festival to allow us to run it from year to year and to safely project a \$5,000 profit on next year's event. The Festival each year will fall on the last Sunday of July and on the Saturday

preceding it. We are also planning to promote our February St. Sava Celebration as a cultural and fund raising event.

One of the highlights of our past year was the two weeks which His Grace, Benjamin, spent in Colorado. His Grace and, perhaps Bishop Tikhon, will be here next October, at the time of our Diocesan Assembly in Colorado Springs, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Fr. Deacon Averky's ordination, the 40th of Fr. Eugene's and my own 30th anniversary.

We are blessed to have back among us Gabriel Hayman, who is a master Iconographer. Some of our people have taken advantage of his residence here to have family icons written or to obtain gifts for children and Godchildren.

PARISH LIFE

Our Metric Records indicate that, in the twelve months between September 1st of 2003 and August 31st of 2004, we celebrated 17 Baptisms, 2 Receptions of Converts by Holy Chrismation, 3 Burials and 3 Weddings. We have about 80 adults who support the Parish on a regular basis out of about 160 adults. There are forty youths on the Church School list and another 6 aged 3 and under.

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Council

In February, our Parish Council held a retreat and took a stern inventory of their own individual commitment to parish life. As a result, we have held a terrific lawn sale, planned and executed our festival in half the normal lead time required by other parishes and turned a lot of the executive duties such as planning and presiding over monthly meetings and making a monthly inventory of our buildings and grounds over to the appropriate officers. The Council is also continuing to pursue our intention to obtain adjacent property for present use and future expansion. This is an extremely complicated matter and the Council is exercising all due care in approaching it. We will need a continuation of our two previous resolutions authorizing the Council to negotiate on behalf the parish. Special praise is due to Erin Busken who has done a splendid job as Senior Warden.

This year, Benjamin Hirsch and three members of our executive Board: Mike Rogozik, Tatiana Russell and Christine Jobanputra, are completing their terms. All are eligible for re-election.

Sisterhood

The St. Mary's Holy Protection Alter Society has had a very successful year. Matushka Maria will have a report but I wish, on my part, to thank her for conscientious leadership during one of our very best years. The Sisterhood conducted a campaign, which resulted in our obtaining a new double oven industrial stove for the Hall kitchen. They raised enough money to purchase a large single door refrigerator large enough to accommodate our biggest pans and trays. Steve Dawson, then, generously contributed money from his mother Julia's Memorial Fund to purchase a two door stainless steel refrigerator for the upper Hall. We probably could not have pulled off the Festival without these wonderful appliances. As always, the Sisterhood donates generously toward our charitable programs, maintains the Parish Hall and Temple and sponsors the weekly meals that allow us to be a community and not just a collection of folks who pass each other on the way in and out of the Church. They also provided special luncheons for all of our area clergy during lent and for our Bishop and other guests on our Nameday. Both their Grocery Coupon program and the weekly coffee hours ought to be supported by all parishioners and the Church cleaning teams are always looking for new helpers, both men and women.

Parish Clergy

We are indeed honored and I am delighted to have as my assistant Archpriest Eugene Tarris. In 2005 Fr. Eugene will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of his Deaconate and in 2006, when Matushka Paulette and I are celebrating our fortieth Wedding Anniversary, Fr. Eugene will celebrate 40 years in the Holy Priesthood. He has not only been invaluable to the entire Parish by backing me up and covering for me when I am off on assignment for the Deanery or Diocese but he is the celebrant, preacher, music arranger and translator for our monthly Slavonic Liturgies. Further, he has earned an

international reputation for his ongoing work translating the Bulgakov Manuals, which contain a wealth of information about the Feasts and Fasts of the Church. You can visit his work on our Web Page.

Fr. Deacon Averky is now in the process of earning a reputation throughout the Church as well. He has produced a set of Manuals for Readers, A Deacon's Manual and a four-volume set of Trebnik services. The norm in Europe is that a Deacon must serve 10 years to be eligible to receive the "Double Orarian" and, yet, Fr. Deacon Averky was elevated to this dignity by His Grace after only five years.

We have three Seminarians: Alexander Vallens, who is finishing his Master of Divinity Degree this coming spring and is being encouraged to pursue a Master of Theology and PhD. Alex is Webmaster for our very popular web page. We also have Michael Tarris who received a Fellowship to study Eastern Christian Liturgy at the "Pontifical Institute" in Rome and Anatoly Rubtsov, who is completing his PhD from the University of Colorado and, simultaneously, his MDiv from the St. Tokhon's Institute in Moscow. How many parishes do you suppose can boast this?

We have a cadre of trained readers including Head Readers Anthony Dyl Esq. and John Graham as well as Joseph, David Esq. and Benjamin Hirsch. Readers Joseph Yadlowsky and Rupert Applegate are my right hand men for Daily and Sunday Liturgies. Anthony Davis is the world's youngest Cathedral Sacristan and John Davis who, not only reads, but also holds down the bass in the Parish Choir.

Our Choir is large and talented. We are grateful to the core group of the Choir who carry the load at Vespers and Matins, on many Holy Days, for special services and, all too often, for the first part of Sunday Liturgy. Our Holy Week and Paschal Services are outstanding and His Grace praised the singing at the Transfiguration Day Liturgy. We have hoped to add new music to our repertoire but have been unable to do so because of the lack of availability of many singers for regular practices.

I must also thank James Davis, George Piatnitski, Alexander Rudenko, Anton Filinenko, who serve in the Altar almost every week and Andrew Nikolai Gurau, Nicholas Dyl, and Jovan Milosovich the Simon Brothers: James and Matthew, who also serve when they are able to be here.

Support Personnel

We use about 50 small Prosfhora a week or over 2,500 a year. Sandie Kennedy bakes all of these with regular help from Donna Hoffman. They also make about 100 medium loaves a year while Magda Blagaila, Adriana Staicu, Luminitza Gurau and Peggy Yadlowsky provide the 120+ large loaves we require for our services.

Violeta Dawson, Helen Capron, Betty Davidovich, Adriana Staicu, Reader Rupert Applegate and Gabriel Hayman help with the six time a year complete change of all of the coverings and lamps in the Church. Also, Helen washes all of the 200 pieces of glass each couple of months and Sandie polishes every piece of brass and silver in the church, at least quarterly, with the frequent help of Donna.

I wouldn't even want to consider how we would get along without this dedicated and reliable help. Our weekly Church cleaning teams are, also, indispensable. Each team is responsible for the Church once every five weeks.

Property Maintenance

It would cost us thousands of dollars to pay for all of the repairs and maintenance required by our buildings and grounds. Michael Rogozik, as Jr. Warden, heads this department and does most of the repairs. In the last year, Doug Busken, Gary Seurer, Daroah Powell, Anthony Dyl, and Fr. Averky, Ben Hirsch and Berndt Myhr all assist with various projects.

Festival Committee

It is impossible to begin to mention all of those who carried heavy loads of work to make this event work. Erin Busken was General Chairman and received a lot of help from Doug. Kat Jobanputra gave invaluable advice and direction in planning the event and he and Chris donated all of the tents. Matushka Paulette did a splendid job with publicity on a "Shoestring budget" and also provided important liaison with government agencies and politicians. Diana Seurer was food chairman and coordinated all of the menus and cooking dates and cooked a great deal. We also need to mention our Romanian booth, Our Russian booth and our Italian and Greek booths, which brought many people back a second day to get more food. Our ladies filled the hall with a dozen tables filled with baked goods for the bakery booth. Our book and gift kiosk was well stocked and very popular. Kids are still talking about the games, clowns, face painting and air castle and many of our guests were "Blown away" by the quantity and quality of the entertainment. Almost 200 people learned more about our Orthodox Faith through participating in Church tours and visiting the Iconography booth. Set up and clean up crews did their work with unprecedented enthusiasm and thoroughness. A big "Well done!" is once more due to everyone.

PRIEST'S JOURNAL

Finally, my journal indicates that during the Ecclesiastical Year from 9/1/03 to 8/31/04 I:

Served 421 Divine Services of which 141 were Divine Liturgies.

Made 1351 phone calls (and sent about 50 Emails a day).

Made 243 visits, had 234 appointments and 104 meeting and classes.

CONCLUSION

When I came here 20 years ago, my agreement with the Council and Bishop was that I would stay for six years and work to guarantee the stability and survival of the Parish. When that time was up, there was so much that could be done that we never seriously considered asking for reassignment. I came to understand, however, during the Parish Council Retreat last February, that one of my weaknesses is the tendency to do too much myself and to do things that others can do much better than I can. In the months, which have followed, we have made a lot of progress in involving many more people, especially Council Members, in the ongoing operation and special projects of the parish. Some things, like property acquisition and plans for a new temple seem to move forward at a snail's pace. Some programs, such as our Festival and Church Preservation Project, are great success stories in progress. One item, our level of parishioner support for the ongoing operation of our community, is key to all of the rest. We will never be truly free to fulfill our God ordained potential as long as over half of every Council meeting needs to focus on how we are going to meet our monthly bills. The Council seems, however, to have come to realize that this is not an issue of lack of generosity but one of lack of FOCUS, SPIRITUALITY and EDUCATION. It is clear to me that I can talk to everyone in the Orthodox World about their giving and receive positive results: everyone that is but my own people and this is perhaps as it should be. Parents can raise their children in certain ways. But, we are no longer in our childhood, either as a parish or in our relationship as priest and people. As much as we may try to deny it, we are no longer a community predominantly composed of struggling refugees. We are a young and middle-aged community of talented and prosperous people who have been materially blessed by God in ways of which the last generation could only dream. No! we are no longer in our childhood as a parish. After childhood, all that parents can do is to attempt to give a warning once in a while and to set an example. It is really up to our people and their elected officers to address the mechanics of the issue. Still, I am persuaded that, when this anxiety is lifted, all of the rest of our issues will resolve themselves.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Proto Joseph