

Annual Dean's Report  
6 November, 2005

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

### HISTORICAL PRESERVATION PROJECT

Holy Transfiguration Cathedral is now in its 108<sup>th</sup> year of service to Christ and in the 108<sup>th</sup> year of our beautiful and historic Temple. As a consequence of the ravages of time and the vicissitudes of nature, the Cathedral is in need of immediate and expensive preservation and restoration measures. In 2005, we received 1 \$ 9,500 grant from the Colorado Historical Society to study the causes of the cracks and fissures which have regularly appeared in our interior and exterior walls of the building. We now have both an explanation and a remedy for the condition known as "Rising damp", and are awaiting a response from the State to our request for a \$ 150,000 matching grant to halt and reverse the damage. We expect to follow up this set of procedures with an almost equally expensive project to restore the interior of the building. All of this, promises to be a huge financial drain on the Congregation but there is simply no alternative but to undertake these projects and the breadth of support which Matushka and I have received, in the form of letters of endorsement, from throughout the Greater Denver area are a tribute to the high regard in which our parish and its contribution to the Community, are held. Three prominent historians, the local Greek Metropolitan, several community leader and politicians have all endorsed our grant application and the Historic Denver project to preserve "Sacred places" has included us as the lead off article in a book on such sites in the City. Our part of the cost of repairing and preserving our Temple will amount to a 25 % match to the State Historical Fund Grant. Over the three or four years that phases A and B of the project are expected to take, we will need to provide up to \$100,000 for the work. We have this money in our Property Preservation Endowment Fund but would prefer not to raid the principal of what was expected to be a perpetual trust for the upkeep of our property. I am presently investigating other sources of grant funding which might be used as matching funds for our State grant and we are counting on some generous contributions from the members and friends of Holy Transfiguration. Because of the fine job that David Hirsch has done in investing our endowment funds, we should also be able to remove substantial earnings from the endowment.

### LAND ACQUISITION PROJECT

Meanwhile, our plan to ultimately purchase adjacent Birch/Kulick land and to erect a spacious Temple near our historic Cathedral is moving forward slowly. We have the agreement of the family to grant us the "Right of first denial" on the property at a reasonable price but this will not occur until the family is ready to relinquish the entire parcel and that could be several years in the future. It does no good to go into the details, but, suffice it to say that in the month of November of last year, we received a demand from the family's attorney that we make an offer on the property by December or risk their selling it to another party. When we made what our real estate agents assured us was a fair opening proposal, we received a call from the family asking why we were in such a hurry to close the deal. It became clear at that point that the attorney was following one agenda and the family another. At this juncture, there was nothing to do but to make an agreement with the family to allow them time to work through their issues while we accepted their "Good faith" promise of a fair price at a future time. Meanwhile, we are putting away funds in our "Land Acquisition Account". I had never imagined the possibility that Matushka and I might pay off our ten year pledge to this fund before the time that the land might actually become available. Still, it is in our interest not to let this land get alienated from us whenever it becomes available. It is an historical annex to our property and an integral part of any future plans we may have for expansion. I would also suggest, in consideration of the growth in attendance which we have experienced over the years, that we not close the door on the possibility of establishing a "Daughter Mission" somewhere in the area to meet the increasing needs of our congregation.

The past three years we have adopted a resolution to permit our Parish Council to negotiate the purchase of adjacent or near-by property. In spite of what appears to be a temporary delay in our plans, I urge the renewal of this authority on at least a year-by-year basis.

### ICON PROJECT

In 2005 we added about 15 new written icons to our temple. These were all the work of our own Gabriel Hayman who, quite simply, has become a first rate iconographer. Gabriel donated some of these icons himself and many others were purchased for the Church by our parishioners. Thanks to this project, we now have genuine written icons of many of the Great Martyrs and, especially, of the Woman Martyrs. I urge anyone who is in need of iconography for their home, to avail themselves of Gabriel's excellent work offered at a most reasonable price.

### ORDINATION

We were honored to have our own son, Fr. Alexander Vallens, ordained to the Holy Diaconate in our Temple on the Saturday of St. Thomas' Week. While we had hoped and anticipated Fr. Alexander's return to our Deanery to undertake missionary work, yet the constraints of his need to support his family combined with the importunities of St. Tikhon's Seminary seem to have conspired to keep him, for the time being, in the East

### MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

While our membership has remained more or less steady, our Parish has seen 23 Holy Baptisms in the 2005 ecclesiastical year. It is a monument to the shortsightedness of our Central Administration that we can not number among our "Official" members the approximately 25 Eritrean families and dozens of new Russian, Romanian, Georgian and Uzbek families who have come to us as refugees of one kind or another but who are not as yet able to contribute toward the support of the parish.

Still, we have received some wonderful new Parishioners among whom are Doctors Christian and Andreea Arvinte and their two wonderful children, Maria and Tudor. It is a special joy to our family that the Arvintes last spiritual home was the Parish of St. Thomas the Apostle which Matushka, I and the boys were blessed to help found in Springfield Missouri. In fact, I was serving the Liturgy there on St. Thomas Sunday of 1984 when the call came from Denver requesting that I come and meet with the Parish Council here. We are also happy to welcome to parish membership Xenia Grant who is always joyful and willing to do whatever needs to be done to the Glory of God and the beauty and cleanliness of his Church. We are happy to welcome to membership, Vladimir and Irina Sapunov with their children, Anastasia and Alexander. Irina is a post graduate in music and a big asset to both our Slavonic and regular choirs. She is also a piano teacher.

### LANDMARKS

This September, I celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my Holy Priesthood and on July 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2006, Matushka and I will celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our marriage. We consider it to be a special gift from God that we have been able to spend over 2/3 of this ministry and over 1/2 of our married life in service to the people of Holy Transfiguration Cathedral and within the Diocese of the West. We are also honored by the knowledge that the very hour of our wedding in 1966 was the hour of repose of our Venerable Father John Maximovich. At around the same time, on 4 July, 2006, Fr. Eugene will celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Priesthood.

### METRIC RECORDS

In addition to 23 Baptisms, we have celebrated 2 Marriages and conducted 2 burials. Our current official adult membership is 78. We were grieved this year by the passing of Irene Dorchinez, a daughter of our parish founders, who breathed her last in the fullness of Faith and the assurance of eternal life through Christ Our True God.

## PRIEST'S JOURNAL

In the past Church year, my journal indicates that I have:

Placed or received 1436 phone calls. (This number has greatly declined over the years due to my use of Email.)

Made 232 Home or Hospital Visits.

Served 132 Divine Liturgies and Offered 423 Divine Services.

Had 207 Appointments in my office.

And attended or conducted 152 Meetings or Classes

## FINANCES

Because of the wonderful, "Financial Educational Materials" which have been produced by Erin the past two years as well as because of the monthly, "Financial Temperature" Reports which she has provided, we have all been kept aware of the needs of our parish and of the adequacy of our efforts to meet these needs. We have also had several notable if modest successes in our effort to enhance our St. Sava Celebration, in our Bright Friday POOD (Pan Orthodox Dinner Dance) and in our Orthodox Food Festival, which promise to provide long term augmentation to our normal stewardship. Nevertheless, we each must come to terms with the reality that Orthodox Stewardship is a personal responsibility of each of us and that, ultimately, it is our own spiritual growth and not our special events which will propel this Congregation to the greatness to which God has called us.

## PERSONAL COMMENTS

I wish to take notice of two "Pillars of the Parish", Matushka Maria Davis, who has found the way to make the Sisterhood work. (Beg, cajole, exhort and, if nothing else works, do It yourself.) and Erin Elizabeth Busken: wife, working mother, and "Iron Woman", who is the most efficient Senior Warden with whom I have been privileged to work in 30 years. I also wish to take note of the work of Fr. Eugene Tarris, who is, not only my strong right arm, but who is Co-pastor with me in every way and has placed us on the map of American Orthodoxy with his weekly translations from Bulgakov's Priest's Desk Manual and Fr. Averky Davis, who is, effectively, the Protodeacon of the Diocese and author of several Manuals for Reader and Deacons. His work is now a major part of the curriculum at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

Yours in Christ,

Archpriest Joseph Hirsch

Dean of Holy Transfiguration Cathedral

Dean of the Rocky Mountain Deanery of the Diocese of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West of The Orthodox Church in America