

Volume 5, Issue 1

Winter 2008-09



Our Journey Together as Orthodox Christians

In Community

“Come And See” *By Dn. Fred Arvidson*

Whenever we at St. John’s gather for baptisms and chrismations of new converts, we witness the result of this invitation. People come, they see and they are baptized into the Church. Such a simple way to spread the Gospel, and yet “come and see” has been the way the Gospel has spread from the very beginning, literally from the very first day.

In the first chapter of St. John’s gospel, we find a detailed account of the days just after Christ’s baptism. On the day after, Jesus walked past John the Baptist who said to his own disciples: “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.” Andrew and another of those disciples immediately set out after Jesus, who turned to them and asked: “What do you seek?” Instead of replying with some profound theological question, Andrew asked: “Where are you staying?” Likewise, Jesus doesn’t try to explain who He is, why He has come, or what He is going to do. Rather, He simply tells them to “come and see.” They did as He suggested, and then, after spending some time with Him, they went to find others to whom they could repeat Jesus’ invitation: “Come and see.”

St. John goes on to tell us that Jesus also invited Philip to come and see. Philip got excited, tracked down his friend, Nathanael, and tried to explain what he had seen and heard. Nathanael was skeptical until, finally, Philip too said simply, “Come and see.”

Many of us tend to make Philip’s mistake. When asked about the church I attend, the first part of my explanation is often a confusing and detailed effort to distinguish between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Then I might launch into an even more confusing and complicated discussion about what distinguishes my



Dn. Fred with his dog Mac and his trusty Land Rover.

particular jurisdiction, the Antiochian, from the Greek and Russian. About this time, I get frustrated and say something about Acts 11:26 and the beginning of our Church. The response from my victim in this exchange is usually similar to that of Nathanael: “Can any good thing come out of Antioch?” I am better off if, like Andrew and Philip, I simply use Jesus’ words: “Come and see.”

Isn’t that the way most of us got here? Some people land in the St. John’s church community because they are on a personal spiritual quest seeking God. That’s great. But maybe just as many people first visit because it looks like a nice neighborhood.

“A little bit of hospitality, a warm smile and a friendly greeting may be all it takes for someone to come and see.”

Maybe, like St. Andrew, who simply wanted to see where Jesus lived, they are curious as to what all these people (and, in my case, dogs) are doing outside in all kinds of weather,

walking up and down the road and waving to each other. Maybe that’s all it takes. A little bit of hospitality, a warm smile and a friendly greeting may be all it takes for someone to come and see.

I’m here because 30 years ago, my wife Joyce saw someone turning down a gravel road she had never noticed before, and the driver of that car had that “I’m goin’ to church” look. Joyce followed the car down to where the road ended, and the lady got

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Community Cooks: Featuring Kh. Betsy Dunaway- By Kh. Barbara Dunaway

A Christmas Eve meal with the Bishop

Khouria Betsy and Fr Marc host numerous gatherings during our Bishop Joseph's Christmas visit, but she and I together have concocted a somewhat traditional menu for Christmas Eve. The meal follows the early evening St. Basil's Liturgy, and is served at the St. James House long table. This year the guests were the St. James house hosts, the Frizelle family, the residents who stayed in Alaska for Christmas (5), the Dunaway family, some of Kh. Betsy's family and of course Bishop Joseph and his Subdeacon Michael Habib.

Like others in the community this evening we gather to eat a special fasting meal and then head on home to await Christmas Day with a liturgy beginning at 9AM and a more gala celebration afterwards. Kh. Betsy and I would like to share with you the menu for this traditional meal rather than a recipe.

Christmas Eve Meal

Consomme Brunoise' (a thin vegetable soup)
Halibut Chowder
Hominy with red & green peppers
Hummus & Pita bread
Smoked Salmon
Bread & Crackers
Olives and assorted condiments
Clementine Oranges
Cookies
Water and Wine to lighten our hearts



Kh. Betsy

Kh. Barbara

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Outpost of the Kingdom

By Anna Haley

"Who are these people and what are they doing?" -Eudora Welty

The year was 1982 and Keith and I were newlyweds. We had just come away from a prayer meeting at a Church of Christ, the church of Keith's ancestors. We both felt like something was missing in that place of worship and that we were starving, but we did not know what the "something" was or how to find it.

The following week we knelt next to our couch and prayed, asking God to lead us to the place of worship that He chose for us, according to His will. As we were getting up off our knees there was a knock at the door. It was our neighbor, Robin, from the apartment across the hall. She knew that we were stained glass craftsmen, and she wondered if we were interested in making stained glass windows for her church. Keith and I looked at each other with the knowledge and the sense that something extraordinary had just happened.



Anna and Keith in front of a stained glass window they created.

A week later Robin knocked again and invited me to learn about her faith. She invited me to a teaching at the St. James House on the "Timeline of Church History." I attended the meeting and as I listened to the teaching, I began to weep; I was overwhelmed with relief and gratitude and couldn't wait to tell my husband that our prayer had been answered.

In the weeks that followed, Fr. Mike Molloy talked with us at length, and we became catechumens just before Pascha. It was April when I found I had an ectopic pregnancy and needed emergency surgery. We lost our first child, but, thankfully, God had ushered us into His Church. I was visited by some of the St. John's faithful who brought icons, food, prayers and good wishes. I remember their smiles and their love as if it was yesterday.

Today, some 26 years later, we still worship with the community at St. John's. Come and see why.

The Struggle for Peace

By: Sally Eckert

Last September I attended the North American conference of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship (OPF), and I've been mulling over what I brought home with me from that meeting. The OPF is "an association of Orthodox Christian believers seeking to bear witness to the peace of Christ by applying the principles of the Gospel to situations of division and conflict, whether in the home, the parish, the community where we live, the work place, within our particular nations, and between nations. We work for the conservation of God's creation and especially of human life. We are not a political association and support no political parties or candidates."

From many excellent presentations, I zeroed in on Jim Forest's essay on the Church and conscientious objection. Having come from a family of soldiers, I was particularly interested in the "just war doctrine" of the Western Church, the foundation of which was laid by St. Augustine. He points out that although the "just war doctrine" was widely accepted in the West, it never became dogma. Jim says, "The Orthodox Church never saw war as something which could, even in the case of warding off invaders, be regarded as just or good. Even in situations where there seemed no viable alternative to war, war was regarded as an evil, albeit a lesser evil, but still evil, as inevitably war involves killing and the commission of other grave sins."



Sally Eckert

Jim speaks of nationalism and questions whether he has allowed it to erode his conscience. "Am I first of all a member of the nation into which I happened to be born?....Am I even capable of recognizing that there might be a conflict between God and country?"

Following my return from the conference, I found two

complementary resources. Fr. Thomas Hopko's "Church and State" podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio present a brief summary of Church history that adds setting to the canons and statements of the saints. If I am asked what am I like, my best initial answer should be the question, "When?" This is true of the Church as well. Not only have I been different during different periods of my life because of what I've learned, where I've been, and how I have or haven't allowed God to work in my life, but our

"...but our world also has changed dramatically as it has circled our sun and spun through time under the influence of nations, politics, and ideologies..."

world also has changed dramatically as it has circled our sun and spun through time under the influence of nations, politics, and ideologies (although I should probably say under the influence of principalities, powers, and rulers).

We Orthodox love the enduring sameness of our Tradition throughout all nations and all time since Pentecost; however, the Church has faced and responded to different challenges and blessings throughout all time. Setting is important.

The second resource is *Crazy for God* by Frank Schaeffer, the story of how he "grew up as one of the elect, helped found the religious right, and lived to take all (or almost all) of it back." He wrestles nicely with the subjects of abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, deadly force, and war. "I think there is a difference," he writes, "between killing in cold blood, when there are other alternatives, and killing out of necessity. And I don't think this difference is always clear." And then he says something I find very compelling: "I want to live in a society that is willing to *struggle* with these balancing acts. I want to be in a society that values human life, because I am human, and far from perfect, and I want to be valued."

Yes, me too, and my neighbor as myself. And that's what I brought home with me.†

(The complete text of Jim's essay can be found at the OPF website: <http://incommunion.org/?p=404>)

Glory to God for Family

By JoAnn Webster

How could I ever have imagined, in my younger life, that in my later years (72 in August 2008) I would be living next door to my great grandchildren? That they would belong to the same church? That I would watch them be baptized by Fr. Marc and attend St John Community School, as my five grandchildren had done, before them?

I often think of my mother and how she loved her grandchildren. But she seldom saw them, as the Army moved us around the country and even to Europe. She lived to see her first great-grandchild, Andrea, but only once, when we all gathered in Santa Barbara for Christmas. My grandfather was there, too, so we had photos taken of five generations. My father lived much longer, and heard the news of the birth of his great-great grandson, Roman. His comment to being called a great-great grandpa was: "Isn't it great?" Sadly, he died before actually seeing little Roman, who came to California for his funeral.

So, I feel very greatly blessed that God has allowed me to live long enough to enjoy my family, to watch them grow, to bake cookies with my two little great granddaughters and have lunch with Roman at school. My great grand daughters have such beautiful names, that I was inspired to write a poem about them:

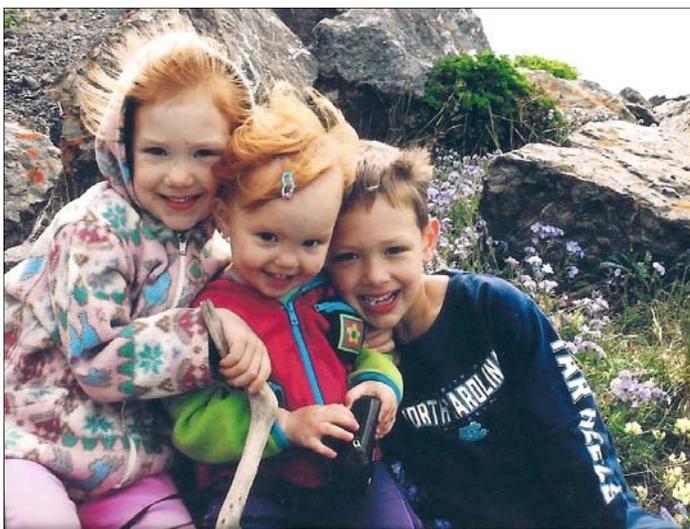


**Evelyn Clair and Josephine Jane,
two little girls playing out in the rain.
Mama says" Come in before you get wet."
"But Mama" says Evy, "we're not finished yet.
We've puddles to jump in, and mudpies to make,
and Josie is baking a marigold cake.
Two moose wander by with dripping brown hair,
and up to the porch sneaks a little black bear.
Evy and Josie run in the back door,
as raindrops and mudpies drip on the floor.
The bath is all ready, so on up the stair
climb Josephine Jane and Evelyn Clair.**

Their brother, Roman, inspired another poem, when I heard his daddy leave for work one day on his motorcycle:

**Roman Gregory Stiehr, listen can you hear?
There's a motorcycle coming and it's humming in your ear.
Daddy's coming home. He's been working very hard.
Look, there's his motorcycle, coming in the yard.
"Daddy, can I ride with you? Let's go on up the street.
I want to visit Uncle James and have some pie to eat.
And Uncle George is home from war. He's been gone all year."
So, on the back of Daddy's bike hops Roman Gregory
Stiehr.**

Glory to God for our family, and for the St. John Community which has nurtured us all. Including my husband Tom's mother, Phyl (who now rests in our church cemetery), five generations of our family have worshipped and lived here in this holy place.



**Above: Evelyn Clair, Josephine Jane and Roman Gregory
Left: JoAnn with Josie, Evy and Roman**

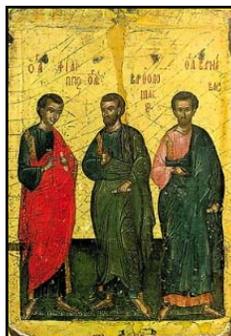
Come And See

By Dn. Fred Arvidson

(Continued from page 1)

out and introduced herself and said, yes, there is a church here and you're welcome to come and see. The lady didn't try to explain doctrine or creed or liturgics. She just said "come and see." It happened in our community thirty years ago and it is still probably the best way to spread the Gospel.

We can quickly become frustrated when we try to explain the Church. The Gospel is very, very simple; the Orthodox Church – its history, councils, calendar, etc. – tend to be more complicated. But in its liturgical life, the Church is full of Christ. Everything we do here relates to the Gospel; it IS the Gospel. So if people come and see – sometimes maybe having to squint a bit to avoid icon overload or sneezing at the incense – with an open heart and mind, they



**Sts. Philip, Nathanael
(Bartholomew) and
Barnabas**

will encounter Christ. No matter how busy we are with shopping and baking and decorating, we cannot be in Church here during Christmas and not see Christ. For the Church is the body of Christ; THIS is where God can be found. This is where we begin our journey to the Kingdom which is to come.

Our hope and our faith is that in due time Christ will recognize us and say, "Come and enter into the Kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning." But it all begins with that first invitation: Come and See!

(This article was adapted from a homily given by Dn. Fred who with his wife Joyce have lived in Eagle River for 30+ years.)

Remembering a Patriarch

By Mary Alice Cook

On a splendid green and gold September afternoon in 1993, three white stretch limos arrived at St. John's Cathedral. Inside one of the limos was His Holiness ALEKSEY II, Patriarch of Moscow, who was in Alaska for the first stop on a three week American tour. In his entourage were a half-dozen security men from the U.S. State Department, a Russian television crew, and fourteen other Orthodoxy clergy.

Earlier that afternoon, the Patriarch had visited St. Nicholas Church in the tiny Athabaskan village of Eklutna, population 35, just up the road from St. John's. Patriarch ALEKSEY was on his way to St. Innocent's Cathedral in Anchorage, along with its priest, Fr. Nicholas Harris, a good friend of the St. John's parish. It was Fr. Nicholas who had arranged for the Patriarch to pay us a visit.

Everyone who could make it was on hand to greet him. We stood in the nave of the Cathedral, singing the hymn to the Theotokos, as he came in, a stout, bearded man in black rasson and white and gold *klobuk* (the headdress unique to the Russian patriarch). He walked slowly to the front of the nave, took off his *klobuk* and bent to kiss the altar.

Through a translator, we listened as he said a few words of greeting, then we followed him to the south wing of the nave where he said prayers of blessing for the icons that would soon be installed in the newly built



Patriarch ALEKSEY II during his visit to St. Johns.

St. Sergius Chapel. He called the chapel "a spiritual bridge between our two countries."

Even though Russian missionaries came here over two hundred years ago, ALEKSEY II was the first head of the Russian Orthodox Church ever to visit Alaska. I believe he was probably as surprised to meet us, a parish of American Orthodox converts, as we were to meet him. The story of his church visits that day made the front page of the *Anchorage Daily News*, complete with a picture of the St. John's faithful, waving goodbye as his limo headed out on Monastery.

Patriarch ALEKSEY II fell asleep in the Lord on December 5, 2008. We at St. John's, along with Orthodox faithful around the world, pray that his memory will be eternal.

Those Who Came and Stayed *Recent Chrismations and Baptisms*



Fr. Marc anointing Isaiah John with the oil of Holy Chrism.



Three of the infants with their sponsors.



**Anthony Elwell and
Kastle Arturo**



**Samuel, Bianca and Isaiah John,
Bianca's godmother, Helen
Coleman looking on.**



The tonsuring of Bianca



A blessing from Fr. Marc



**December 22, 2008: Bishop JOSEPH and our priests with most of
the new members of St. Johns.**

On November 30, 2008 we were blessed to receive 12 people into to the Holy Orthodox Church.

Five adults were Chrismated: David and Christine Lindblom, Jaye Keener, Kastle Arturo and Anthony Elwell.

Those baptized included the newly adopted children of the Temples; Bianca, Samuel and Isaiah John. Four infants were also baptized; Marina Rogers, Gabriella Eden Ouzinides, Adelaina Nicole Elwell and Catherine Rose Mead.

In August we also welcomed the Weiss family, Corey, Grace and their daughters Olivia and Heidi.

...“Chrismation is an ancient Christian rite of anointing with oil those seeking to be received as eucharistic communicants of the Church. Its origins go back to the Davidic monarchy at the selection of a king, to the ordination of Aaronic priests, to the blessing of the appurtenances of the wilderness tabernacle and of the Jerusalem Temple. In the Eastern Church, not only adult catechumens, but also newly-baptized infants are anointed, using oil blessed by the bishop, upon the head, ears, hands, and feet. Anointing, or unction, is also used in the sacrament of healing the sick, as well as at the final hour of human life. One begins and ends one’s life in the Church anointed with oil, like a king, but also like the half-dead traveler upon whose wounds the Samaritan poured oil—sealed, healed of all sickness of body and soul, chosen and blessed forever.” Kimberly Patton from the foreword in *A Sorrowful Joy* by Albert Raboureau

Everyone's Home: Studies at the St. James House

By Fr. Marc Dunaway

Addictions of any kind bring fear. You worry in the back of your mind if you could survive without this addiction. Or what you might do if something you've become so dependent on were to disappear? And should you want to leave your addiction, fear whispers that you will fail, that it has become part of who you really are. All these were unexpected discoveries made in a recent discussion at the St. James House.

Certainly the St. James House is not an academic institution. Most of the real learning comes from the daily interaction among those who live there together for a year, preparing and eating meals, settling conflicts, and building friendships. Still, a



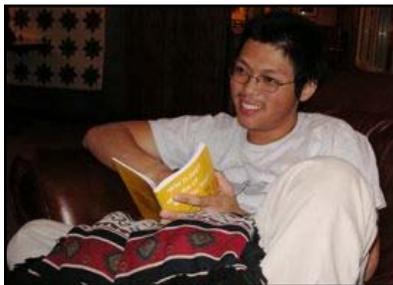
Jonny Braun from California

few regular classes have always been part of the program. One staple we have shared for the last nine years has been the "Who" book by Dee Pennock. It is a quirky book with line drawings in a definitely '70's

style, the product of a Sunday School class for teens in an Orthodox Church in Portland, Oregon, where Dee, now in her 80's, still lives. Nevertheless, the book has a certain charm to it and, despite its occasional dips into black-and-white answers, or, who knows, perhaps because of them, it has been an excellent discussion starter for group reading.

Usually one night a week we gather in the cozy living room, the young people with their feet propped on the coffee table, or wrapped in a blanket with their legs tucked under them. Then for about an hour and a half we take turns reading and discussing a chapter. By the end of the book, the residents of the St. James House can define what is meant by a "sinful passion." They understand the real evil of pride and the addictive character of vanity, a much more prevalent force than it is usually given credit for, and the pitfalls of self-love. All of this is meant to help them weed out the passions in their own lives and move closer to answering one crucial question contained in the title of the book: "Who am I?"

Another favorite book is the classic, *I Loved a Girl*, written in the 1950's by the Lutheran missionary pastor, Walter Trobisch. It is short and easy to read since it is a collection of letters between the pastor and two young Africans who fall in love. With remarkable wisdom and candor he, along with his



Pons Muterum (CA)

wife Ingrid, guides them through many questions about love, sex, and human relationships. During this last year the letters were read by Tom and Laura Frizelle and Gerry and Shelly Finkler, each of them assuming the role of one character, and then facilitating the discussion.

Another regular part of the St. James House studies has been to host the winter Catechism for the Cathedral. The residents not only attend the ten classes, but prepare a meal for all who come and host them for the evening.

It is an evening that begins at 6:30 p.m. and ends at the 9 o'clock bells. Over the last nine years we have also read *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis; *Beginning to Pray* by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom; and *Liturgy and Life* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. We have also been privileged to host many wonderful speakers, including Dr. Tristram Engelhardt; Mother Nina of St. Nilus Island; Rod Dreher from Dallas, who wrote *Crunchy Cons*; Fr. Roman Medvedev from Russia; Matthew Gallatin, who wrote *Thirsting for God in a Land of Shallow Wells*; and Ron Dart and Angus Stuart of the Thomas Merton Society of Canada.

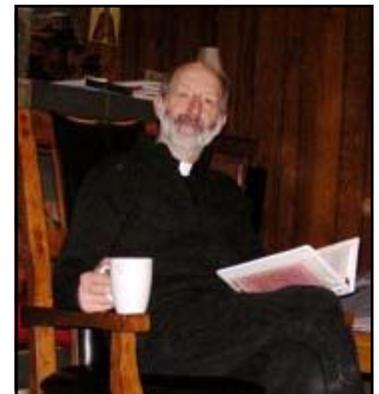
But one of the most interesting and moving parts of all the studies is the time we set aside for each of the young people to take the front chair and share something significant to them. It can be a poem, a scripture, a song, or an experience. In these short times we have heard stories about favorite saints and words from Mother Theresa. We have seen tears well up at reading aloud, "Be Still My Soul," and feet tap to the beat of a popular song. There have been testimonies about inspiring grandparents, and about the tough lessons learned when these have died. But nearly always I am humbled at the sincerity, tenderness and openness of those who share.

So what we study at the St. James House is seldom presented as a formal lecture. It is more discussing together wisdom from many places and trying to apply it to our lives as we find ourselves together in this house, through a long Alaskan winter that after awhile gives way to Pascha, the coming of Spring, the end of school, and then the Summer dispersion of those who have now become friends.

God willing, a new program will begin again in September. You can read more about the St. James House on our website at stjohnalaska.org.



Rebekah Schlichting (CO), Georgia Charlton (WA)



Fr. Marc Dunaway

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St. Ignatius the God-Bearer

By Mary Ann Northey

When our St. John's parish was received into the Antiochian Orthodox Church in 1987, Kh. Barbara Dunaway started an annual tradition of celebrating the December 20th feast day of St. Ignatius of Antioch. In this way, Antioch became less foreign and more familiar to us and St. Ignatius became one of "our" saints.

According to St. Matthew, Jesus illustrated His teaching on humility by setting a little child among the disciples, saying, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 18:4) And according to Orthodox tradition, that little child grew to become Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.

He was of Syrian origin, a disciple of the Apostles, and was ordained a Bishop by St. Peter, but little else is known about Ignatius' life. It is said that he was visited in Antioch by the Emperor Trajan who urged him to make sacrifices to idols. Ignatius refused and was put in chains and forced to walk to Rome. On his way, he sent letters to several of the churches and seven of these letters survived. They contain some of the earliest teachings about the organization, practices and beliefs of the Church. On December 20 in the year 106, Ignatius ended his life in a Roman arena, torn to pieces by the beasts. In his icons, he is flanked on each side by a lion.

After his death, the saint's followers carried his relics back to Antioch where they remained until 637, when they were transferred to the Church of St. Clement in Rome. "We have not only to be called Christians," said St. Ignatius, "but to be Christians." By his virtuous life and noble death, St. Ignatius strengthened the faith of many.

