

Volume 5, Issue 2

Spring/Summer 2009



Our Journey Together as Orthodox Christians

In Community

Growing up a PK By Dn. John Rogers

Late one Sunday afternoon (after church, of course), my dad, David (a quasi-member of our church), and I left my house in Gary, IN and headed toward Ligonier, PA. We were heading to the Antiochian Village, where David and I were going to spend the week as campers. It was the summer of 1989, I was in the 4th grade and it was the first time I had been away from home without the rest of my family. That week was also the first time I heard the term ‘PK’. A fellow camper had seen me talking to my dad after morning chapel and later inquired if, in fact, I was a ‘PK’. No doubt seeing the confusion on my face, he quickly reworded his question, ‘So are you a Priest’s Kid?’ I answered ‘yes’ and the conversation moved on, but I was left with two lingering thoughts. First, what an odd question it was. And second, why does it matter? Yes, my dad is a priest, but that doesn’t make me any different.

It is a real credit to my Mom and Dad that I had no concept of the term PK until the 4th grade. But it is an even greater feat, that if there was pressure on me it was never from within my family. Within my own home, I never considered myself anything other than a regular kid. I played sports, watched TV, listened to music, and played video games. I also got into trouble, disobeyed, fought with my brother, and cheated on my homework (rarely, I promise). I never felt forced to become something or someone that I was not. Yes, certain things were expected of me, but I never felt those expectations were unjustified, unreasonable or there simply because my dad was a priest. There were no ultimatums when I decided to grow my hair long and wear band t-shirts all the time. Nor was there a screaming match when I decided to not serve as an acolyte anymore. Just not-so-subtle suggestions of what might look better and constant reassurance that I was loved.

But as is often said, “The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” While my parents did everything in their power to make sure I didn’t feel like a PK inside my home, how the outside world treated me was a different story. Before my sophomore year in high school, my family moved to Aiken, South Carolina so my dad could (among other things), help start a mission there. South Carolina is right in the middle of what is often called the ‘Bible Belt’. Churches are everywhere. It would be an exaggeration to say

there is one on every street corner, but it wouldn’t be much of an exaggeration. Sadly, very few of these churches are Orthodox, so Orthodoxy is very foreign to most people. Having people find out that I was Orthodox and my church had icons or had a different Easter was one thing, but having these same people find out that my dad was a priest another. If they knew I was a PK then they would expect me have answers to their questions.

People simply have higher expectations and standards when it comes to the priest’s kid. This has both positive and negative consequences. First, I found people were more likely to trust me, give me more responsibilities than my peers and in general act as if I was more mature. The downside, of course, is that when I did finally act my age, people were not so quick to forgive. Mistakes made by the florists’ son or the engineer’s daughter are quickly forgotten, but transgressions of the PK are etched forever in people’s memory.

Throughout my teenage years I rebelled against the expectations that other people had for me. I pushed the Church farther and farther away because people expected me to be more devout than I was. Now, I still went to Church. I attended services, sang, and did everything my parents expected. But I wasn’t *there*. I didn’t go to pray or to worship God. I went because it’s what I was supposed to do. The Church was only a part of my life during the two measly hours that I attended service each week. Many times I went out of my way to be busy during a service and stay out late enough that my parents would be asleep before I got home (that way I didn’t have to answer any questions).

As I pushed God out of my life, day to day activities began to take on less meaning.

(Continued on page 4)



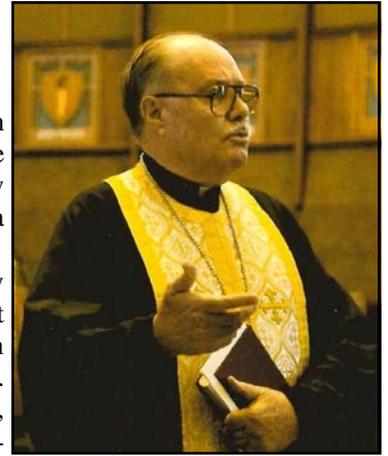
Dn. John with wife Christine and daughters Marina (8 mo.) and Meghan (2) Taken on Pascha 2009.

Remembering Fr. Richard Ballew

By JoAnn Webster

The year was 1976. About 30 people were sprawled on the floor or in bean bag chairs in the living room of the “Big House” in Eagle River, Alaska, listening enraptured, to three visitors, also sprawled on the floor with us. Jack Sparks, Jon Braun and “Dick” Ballew were teaching about the Kingdom of God and how believers were a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...” (I Peter 2:9).

Fast forward to 1978. My husband, Tom, and I and a young Fr Marc Dunaway were in class at the new Academy of Orthodox Theology in Goleta, California. The subject was “Christology” and the teacher, Fr. Richard Ballew, was explaining the two natures in the second person of the Trinity: how the Son of God was fully God yet fully man. Fr. Ballew introduced us to the champion of the true faith of the 4th century, St. Athanasius, who helped draft the Nicene Creed and who later wrote the classic “On the Incarnation” (still available from SVS Press). St.



Athanasius was Fr. Richard’s hero. He called him and his supporters “white hats” and the followers of Arius ‘black hats’, for trying to sabotage the faith which had been handed down by the Apostles.

Fast forward again to 1987: Metropolitan Phillip was in our new cathedral in Eagle River, welcoming us “home” to the Orthodox faith, and chrismating us. The same year Fr. Richard was ordained as the pastor of St. Athanasius Church in Goleta. Years later he moved to Elk Grove, CA where he was pastor until falling asleep this past January.

Fr. Richard left a rich legacy and helped many of us learn the foundation of our faith in the Holy Trinity. Thank you, Fr. Richard, for teaching so many about the Orthodox faith. May your memory be eternal!

Tom and JoAnn Webster spent seven years ('78-'85) in Goleta, CA as students and helpers at the Academy of Orthodox Theology. They returned to Eagle River to establish Webster Tax Service.



Fr. Jon Braun and Fr. Richard speaking at the Big House in 1976.

In Community is published by: Mary Alice Cook, Barbara Dunaway, Maye Johnson and Rebekah Johnson

We welcome your comments.

You may contact us at: St. John Orthodox Cathedral PO Box 771108 Eagle River, Alaska 99577

E-mail: frmarcd@aol.com www.stjohnalaska.org

Outpost of the Kingdom By Kh. Barbara Dunaway

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

With the coming of spring in Alaska our hearts also turn to love....love of enduring light with the long days, love of grass and flowers and warmer temperatures, love of shaking off the winter doldrums and coming out of our dens of hibernation to all sorts of projects.

This present newsletter is one of the projects, requiring me to dig deep for inspiration and words to express my thoughts. Most of this letter is about youth and from youth who are always a noticeable presence at St John’s community. We love to hear from them if they will take the time out of their busy lives. I see them all around me, in the church, at the St. James

house; not withstanding my own family of grandchildren who are between 16 and 24 years of age....and living close by.

They are like spring, full of both promise and of restlessness....to get on with life, to discover the purpose of living. They are good for us not only as the hope for the future but more so for the ‘now’. I need their youth, their enthusiasm, even their disagreements to stay in touch with myself. I don’t want to grow too comfortable and set in my ways. Youth can help me remember my own younger days. And on a lighter note they can help me figure out all this electronic equipment we think we need to use. With that said I hope you enjoy this issue and meditate on some of its content.

Everyone's Home: By Jonny Braun

My dad, Tom, is a deacon at St. Barnabas Orthodox Church in Costa Mesa, California. Unfortunately, I often take for granted how helpful he can be in answering many of my questions about church and God. But having said that, there are also times when it really hits me that "my dad is a deacon!" When I ask him a barrage of questions and we share some good bonding time, it may sound something like this: "Dad, what was your most embarrassing moment as a Deacon? Have you ever gotten such a bad frog in your throat that you had to take a small break from a Litany?!" Or maybe, "When are you going to get a new cassock? You've had that one for 20 years." In addition to the fun question like those, I also ask him some serious questions about religion. He always thinks about his answer before he speaks, and sometimes the best answer he can think of is simply, "I don't know." I respect him a lot for the fact that he is comfortable with giving that answer because he has accepted that there are certain things in this world that will always be a mystery to us.

My dad has influenced me a lot, in terms of how I make decisions in my life. He has always told me that he doesn't care what career I choose or how much it pays. His main advice was, "do it to the best of your ability and for the glory of God." He also taught me that praying about big decisions and even small ones, is the most important thing to do. It is comforting to look back on this good advice now that I am spending almost a year away from my family.

From the moment I began considering moving to Alaska to live in the St James House, I could tell my dad wanted to see it happen. My mom, on the other hand, was shocked when she realized that I was actually serious! She kept asking me, "Jon, are you *sure* you want to go?" "Yes, Mom. I definitely want to try it out." After 19 years of living at home, I was curious to see how I could manage on my own.

When I first arrived I noticed it was very easy to give into the temptations of staying up ridiculously late, snack on chocolate chips constantly and spend too much time playing music instead of getting to know people. I wanted to be more in

control of myself, so I began forcing myself to pray daily, which goes back to my dad's advice. The temptations began to die down and good habits started developing, thanks

to God. Perhaps the thing that most helped me fight against those temptations, in addition to daily prayers, was attending almost every church service. As part of the St James House program, it was required that we attend every church service, unless of course we were unable because of work or school. If it had not been required, I don't think I would have gone to them all. It is encouraging to go to church when you know that everyone living in your house is planning to go too. That is one of my favorite things about the St James House. Everyone tries to make it to all the services. When I see others seek God *together*, I feel very close to Him. It makes me want to seek Him all the more, along with them.

I never really got homesick while I was living here in Alaska, but if I had to pick the time when I most want to go back to California, I would choose right now at the end of the program. Honestly, I cannot wait to get back and be around my family and friends! However, I have absolutely no regrets about the decision I made to live here. I was able to experience something totally different, I met countless people who are genuine and kind and most importantly, I feel the St James House helped bring me closer to God, which is what I hoped for before moving here.

Jonny has returned to Huntington Beach, CA to attend college and be with family and friends.

Jonny with his dad, Dn. Thomas Braun



My Time at "Everyone's Home" By Andrew Stallman



Jonny B. and Drew in retreat on Reed Lake.

Living at the St. James House this past year I have met so many new faces from the Lower 48 and also have gotten to know many old faces better in my own community of St. Johns. During the year I had a great time coaching the St. John soccer team, getting my drivers license and working as a nursing assistant, and being with such loving people at the St. James House. However, I have not gone through a huge pivotal change these past ten months. I still am going through constant struggles and still waking up each morning forgetting who God is. The St. James House has given myself and so many others an extremely supportive faith based environment. Everything from the teaching, to the dishes, to the people who were constantly helping me, all of this I appreciate more than I want to admit. Some might say that these struggles and joys build character, but these experiences have done more than that. They have helped open me up to prayer. I find myself truly thankful to Tom, Laura and everyone involved with me in the St. James program. God has blessed me and I know that with prayer and patience, God will turn my idle words of desired change into something more than just words.

Drew lives on Monastery Dr. and is heading off to college in Salt Lake City.

ASIA 2009-Excerpts from a Blog By: Christopher Dunaway

DURING THE SUMMER OF 2008 JOHN DECIDED THAT WE SHOULD GO TO ASIA. WE MULLED IT OVER, DECIDED THAT IT WAS A TERRIBLE IDEA, AND THAN BOUGHT TICKETS. OUR "HOMIES," TYLER GOODNIGHT AND WELDON JOHNSON ARE JOINING US FOR WHAT WE HOPE IS GOING TO BE TWO MONTHS OF FULL ON CULTURAL IMMERSION, AIMLESS WANDERING, AND SEPARATION FROM THE COMFORT OF OUR WONDERFUL LIFE IN EAGLE RIVER, ALASKA.

Hong Kong: Bad news; we showed up at our hostel around 0200 and they had sold our rooms already because they didn't think we were coming. And so we had a problem. Alone in Hong Kong, no place to stay, no public transit running, no map, no packs, no way to communicate with Ty, no nothing. So what did we do? Like any good Americans, we went to McDonalds, and stayed up all night drinking cheap coffee.

The climax of the day was hooking up with the Ultimate Frisbee crowd here and playing disc in a field surrounded in monolith buildings. We had a great game for about two hours until ,during a five minute stretch, John started cramping from dehydration and I bid for a disc and took around 8 square inches of skin off my knees and left elbow.

Thailand: We arrived in Chaing Mai today at 0545 on a very nice bus with reclining seats and AC that departed Bangkok yesterday at 1900. We got situated at our guesthouse and hit the town. It's 2000 now and we are going to go out for some dinner. Yesterday was one of the worst of my life (dehydration, overheating, adverse reaction to my antimalarial drug, upset stomach from street food, etc.), and it culminated in a brief visit to a Thai emergency room.

In the evening we headed to a large supermarket to try and find a soccer ball and catch some dinner. Unbeknown to us, the mall was the site of 2 very large concerts in the streets. Thousands of Thai people were packed into an area shaped much like 5th or 6th avenue and a pop-rock band was blasting music full volume. We immediately made plans to abandon all our plans, infiltrate the crowd, dance our hearts out, get sprayed by the firehouses that were being blasted from the stage, and meet back at the bikes. John was singing along to songs in Thai at the top of his lungs. Weldon got 6000 Bhat stolen (35 Bhat to the \$) along with his iPhone and credit card - very unfortunate but not ruinous. Tyler and I got into the very heart of the dancing area and were jumping and pumping our fists and hollering along with about 4 trillion Asian teenagers and 0 white people.

In summary, we are having a wonderful time. It has been ear to ear smiles and we are tired, dirty, and hungry for more. Thailand is beautiful and the people have shown us bottomless kindness and acceptance. The political drama in Bangkok has had no impact on the North at all. Things are well.

Thanks for reading. I miss snow and the cold. Hope Alaska is as I remember it. Before I go I think that it's important to mention that no matter how amazing it is here and how cool the people, temples, scenery, and culture are in this part of the world, I have a longing for the peace and beauty of Alaska. We live in the best place on Earth. We aren't homesick, but "distance makes the heart grow fonder" as they say. I keep thinking about the Turnagain Arm. Anyways. Much love - especially to my covy peeps and youths - and to my mom and sister.

A long way away, Christopher (*Christopher Dunaway is also a PK*)



John Marc Dunaway, Tyler Goodnight and Weldon Johnson walking the busy streets of Hong Kong.

MORE OF THIS BLOG CAN BE FOUND AT alaskatoasia.blogspot.com. FURTHER JOURNIES INCLUDED LAOS, VIETNAM, AND MALAYSIA.

Growing up a PK

By: Dn. John Rogers

(Continued from page 1)

I was simply going through the motions. I could tell that something was missing, so I tried to fill the emptiness with stuff. More movies, more music, more video games, more parties, more of everything except God. This, of course, only made me feel more alone. I was in college, my whole life was in front of me, but everything seemed so meaningless.

In a very strange way, being a PK is what pulled me out of my funk. At one of those services that I had for years just floated through and attended because my dad the priest wanted me to, I had an epiphany. As I stood there and felt sorry for myself I was finally able to realize how much my family loves me. No matter what the rest of the world thought of me, they would always be there. And because I had a tangible example of their love, I was, more importantly, able to begin to fathom the infinite love that God has for me. I was overcome with emotion as I venerated the cross that

evening. I wept as I thanked my dad for all he had done for me and apologized for all that I had put him through.

While being a PK had finally set my journey in the right direction, I was in South Carolina and the journey was still not my own. To me, it felt like the journey was my dad's and I was the PK being dragged along for the ride. Enter Eagle River, AK and St. John Orthodox Cathedral. I came up for the summer just wanting to do something different, but I soon realized that here I could make my own path. I could step out of the PK shadow, become my own man, and still trudge the path to salvation.

The rest, they say, is history. I am a PK. I will always be a PK. But while being a PK does not define me, it did shape who I have (and will) become. It is not lost on me that my two daughters, as DK's, may endure many of the same trials and tribulations that I have gone through. It is my fervent prayer that when it matters most they will know that I love them and that God loves them.

Dn. John lives with his family in their home on Monastery Dr.

Holy Week and Pascha 2009



Savannah Nicole and Jonathan Thomas receiving their first Communion.

Lazarus Saturday



The four infants with their Godmothers: Ryan Paul with Rebekah; Leonid Walton with Helen; Lina Rachel with Kari; and Samantha Clare with Mary.

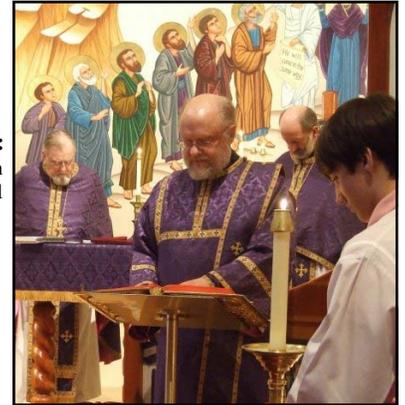


Kylie Alexandra and Hailey Irene were both chrismated.



Holy Wednesday: Three year-old Joachim taking the act of prostration seriously despite the distraction of cousin Anders

Holy Thursday: Dn. Fred Arvidson reading the Gospel during the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil.



Palm Sunday: Sloan and Elias passing out palms and branches.



<Holy Friday: Laura Frizelle venerating the Cross with her sons James and Solomon.



Holy Saturday: Re-entering the church passing under the shroud during the morning matins.

Great and Holy Pascha



“Lift up your gates O’ Jerusalem, and let the King of Glory enter in!”



Dn. Fred Arvidson, Dn. Joseph Ray, Fr. Robert Polson, Fr. Marc Dunaway, Fr. John Downing, Dn. John Rogers, Proto Dn. Patrick Lamb, and Dn. Dan Gray.

Conversation with a Young Man

By Fr. Marc Dunaway

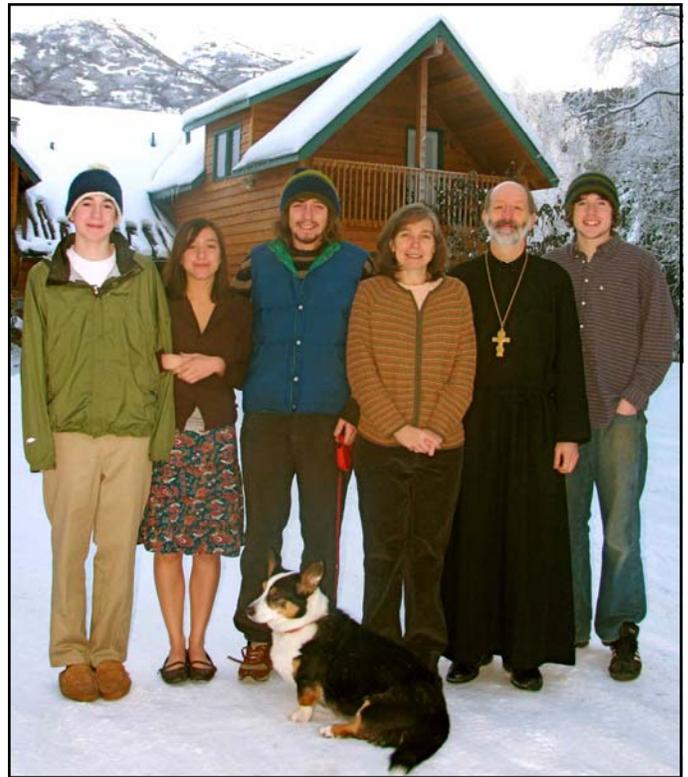
In His earthly ministry Jesus required people to choose. And He still does today. He means to force us to decide what we think about Him and to choose whether we are on His side or not.

In a conversation I had recently with one young man, he asked what he needed to do to live his faith better. He had grown up in the Church all his life, but now he felt he did not take it seriously enough. Now he wanted to. I told him that I thought the first thing he, and each of us as well, needed to do was to make a decision for Christ.

If you have grown up as a Christian it can be easy when you become an adult to just keep on going through the motions you were raised with. Your parents took you to Church, so maybe you just keep going to Church. You prayed before meals at School and now you at least Cross yourself sometimes. And if, when you come to Church, you don't ever think too deeply about the Gospels that are read, the hymns that are sung, or the prayers that are read, you can find yourself eventually doing just the minimum to stay connected to the Church and still be considered a Christian.

But it seems to me that you cannot really stay comfortable in this minimalist position for very long, at least not if you are around others who seem to be serious about their faith. God and life will not let you. Eventually you have to choose, which is what Jesus intended. You will have to decide what you think about Christ and if you want to be a real Christian, you will have to make a decision for Christ.

Make a decision for Christ. This means that at some point you stop doing what you're doing as a Christian only because of inertia and momentum and habit. To choose Christ means that deep down inside your heart you decide that you will side with Jesus Christ. It is no longer holding Him in the judgment seat, evaluating whether you believe in Him or not. It is no longer keeping Him in the distance, relegating His bearing on you to some future time. It is saying, "From this day on, I am for Him, with Him. In the unfolding of my life, I am on Christ's side, to do His will and to follow His teaching." For some this decision may come with great emotion. For others it may come subtly but still profoundly, the quiet click of an inner switch some day, somewhere between leaving to go for a walk and the arriving back home. But nevertheless it is still the click of a switch, a deep and intentional acceptance, a saying, "yes." Either way – emotional or subtle – it is still momentous because now you will be a real follower



Fr. Marc with Benjamin, Macrina, Christopher, Kh. Betsy, John Marc and Hershey the dog.

of Christ and not one in name only.

As this young man and I continued to talk he said that in college today Christianity is mostly scoffed at. "If you are a Christian you are considered stupid," he said. I was sorry to hear this but I did not doubt him. It has often been that way, and to be honest sometimes those who call themselves Christians have brought this opinion upon themselves by their hypocrisy and narrowness. The Christianity some have rejected is often a caricature and not really the message of Christ Himself. In the same way, I know of young people who have grown up here in this Church who say they reject the Church because of the way some people in the Church acted or treated them. I tell them that too is sad, but that it is also really foolish. Christians everywhere, since we are only human beings, are going to be weak and make many mistakes, but this does not change who Jesus is, the Jesus we hear about in the Gospels.

Jesus worked miracles. He shamed the religious pretenders of His day. He taught us how to live as real children of God. He told us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. He then let Himself be arrested, beaten and killed for our sake. And these facts won't change.

"...if you want to be a real Christian, you will have to make a decision for Christ."

And someday every person who encounters them has to decide where he stands with Him. And if we spend our whole life avoiding the question and just going through the motions, that will essentially be a rejection of Him. Going through the motions is not an option Jesus means to leave us. It is like being lukewarm, something, we are told, God will spit out of His mouth. To be a real Christian you have to begin at some point by making a decision for Christ.

Two things more about this have to be clarified. First I do not think you have to wait till you are an adult to make such a decision. You can also make it when you are six or seven or a young teenager. This is good and there are some here who genuinely decided for Christ while they were very young and they have stuck with it ever since. Secondly, while there certainly is down deep inside of us the potential to come to a real conclusion and make a real commitment, the implications of that decision for Christ are challenged everyday and that "yes" to God has to be exercised and reaffirmed many times. And sometimes we, like Peter, can even turn away and denounce this faith. But then, like Peter, we come back and take up following once again. All of this is part of the Christian life as we all know.

The young man and I talked a bit more. "What else should I do to be a serious Christian?" he said. You have to come to the worship of the Church. You just have to be at Liturgy and Vespers and Feast day services. You have to stand in the presence of God with others and pray. You have to live in the fasts and feasts of the Church and obey them. He agreed.

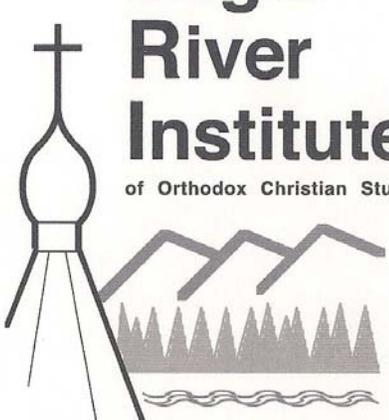
You also have to tithe, I said. You have to give money to the Church. This is not just because the Church needs money to buy vestments and pay the bills and help people, though it surely does. It is because by giving of your resources you become part of it. Giving of your money and energy and time to the life of the Church is good for what it does to you. "Where a man's treasure is, there also is his heart," Jesus said. "It is the difference," I told him, "between the chicken and the pig in a breakfast of ham and eggs." He said he had not heard of this illustration. "The chicken," I said, "is involved, but the pig is committed." He said he got it.

Finally we began to talk about the need also to avoid several dangerous pitfalls in the world around us, addictions, vain pursuits, selfish pleasures, etc. And then our conversation was interrupted, but enough had been said, I think, for the time.



Fr. Christopher, Fr. John, Fr. Marc, Fr. Michael, Fr. Peter, Fr. Daniel and Fr. Daniel Orthodox priests from Anchorage, Eagle River and Wasilla.

If you ever needed a reason to visit Alaska this summer...



Eagle River Institute

of Orthodox Christian Studies

August 1-5, 2009



Dr. Christopher Veniamin

Lessons from Wisdom of Saint Silouan the Athonite: "Keep Thy Mind in Hell and Despair Not"

- 1) Finding the Will of God
- 2) The Place for Obedience in the Christian Life
- 3) Prayer and the Imagination
- 4) More on Prayer: Personal and Liturgical



Author, Rod Dreher

Orthopraxy: Living Rightly in the Modern World

- 1) The Benedict Option: Why Orthodox Christians Should Pioneer New Forms of Community
- 2) Eating to Live: Mindfulness, Morality and Our Complicated Relationship to Food
- 3) Morality and Marketplace: Orthodox Approaches to a Humane Economy
- 4) Orthodoxy and the Medicine of the Future: The Surprising Connections Among Ancient Christian Wisdom, the New Physics, and "Heterodox" Healing

For more information or overnight arrangements call (907)696-2002 and leave a message. Also check our website at stjohnalaska.org

Saint John the Evangelist
Orthodox Cathedral
P.O. Box 771108
Eagle River, Alaska 99577
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St. Raphael of Brooklyn By Robin Armstrong

St. Raphael Hawaweeny was born on November 8 (feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels) in 1860 of Orthodox parents from Damascus, Syria. In July of that year, a persecution and martyrdom of Christians erupted in Damascus. The Hawaweeny family's parish priest, and hundreds of their neighbors were killed (all are commemorated on July 10). St. Raphael's family fled for their lives, taking refuge in Beirut, Lebanon, where St. Raphael was soon to be born.

In time, the family returned safely to Damascus. It was there that the young student received his primary and secondary education and his first theological training. He later moved to Russia to continue his theological studies. During this time period, the Syro-Arab communities in America were growing fast, due to a twenty-year immigration period from the Mid East. With this relocation of Orthodox Christians to the United States, the need for spiritual leadership grew. A group from New York wrote to St. Raphael, now an archimandrite and professor of Arabic languages at the Kazan Theological Academy in Russia, asking him to move to America to care for these scattered believers.

St. Raphael spoke several languages and was educated in both Greek and Russian seminaries. In 1895, he was assigned by Bishop Nicholas in St. Petersburg to New York. He lived there and organized the mission which later became St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn.

With great energy and determination, he traveled extensively around the US, locating these scattered communities, hearing confessions, and giving spiritual counsel. He established some thirty churches. He had no apparent agenda but to lead and care for his widespread flock. St. Raphael's sermons and writings were very practical, based on scripture and his own experiences in life. His energy seemed boundless.

St. Raphael was known foremost as an evangelist and spiritual shepherd, though he was a learned writer and translator. With great rejoicing by the faithful, St. Raphael was elected Bishop of Brooklyn by St. Tikhon in 1904, becoming the first bishop to be consecrated on American soil. He founded The Word Magazine in 1905. St. Raphael died at age 56 in 1915, after twenty years of service in North America. At the time of his death, he administered thirty congregations with 25,000 faithful.

On May 29, 2000, he was officially recognized as a saint of the Orthodox Church at St. Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. St. Raphael himself had consecrated this monastery as the first Orthodox monastery in the New World. Holy Saint Raphael, pray to God for us.

This new icon for the cathedral was painted by Robin Armstrong and blessed on Bright Wednesday.

