

River of Gladness



St. Jacob of Alaska Orthodox Church, Northfield Falls, Vermont

February 2007

GREAT NEWS!

Metropolitan Herman has granted Dn. Caleb Abetti's petition to be ordained to the Holy Priesthood. As a highly unusual blessing, he has also granted Bishop Nikon's request that the ordination take place at St. Jacob's, where Dn. Caleb, after he graduates from seminary in May, will serve as our mission's next priest. To our knowledge this will be the first-ever ordination of an Orthodox priest in northern New England.

The ordination will take place on Saturday, March 10, during a hierarchical Liturgy at which His Grace, Bishop Nikon, will preside. The Liturgy begins at 9:30 a.m. (traditional Orthodox courtesy is that we come early to greet the Bishop at his formal entrance into the church. Late arrivals may not even find a place easily!). The service will probably last until noon, after which we'll caravan to St. John's Catholic Church on Vine St. in Northfield for a reception.

Following the reception and cleanup, St. Jacob parishioners (and no doubt some lingering guests) will return to our church for Great Vespers and the bringing out of the Cross, served by Fr. Caleb with Bp. Nikon. After this we will gather downstairs for a meal and fellowship with the Bishop—who is making his annual visit to our parish—and our new priest.

You will receive a formal invitation by mail or email, with a card or online option to RSVP. Please respond as soon as you receive the invitation so that we can know how many people to prepare for. We look forward to hosting guests from Holy Resurrection in Claremont, N.H. (the Abettis' home parish) and from St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York, as well as other friends and family of Deacon Caleb and Nicole, and a number of clergy. What a day it will be!

To accommodate our guests for the day we will temporarily move pews out of the nave to make more standing room, leaving some along the walls for people unable to stand during the long service. The narthex (or entrance area) will be fully opened as well.

The reception is to be an organized Lenten potluck lunch (a joint undertaking with Holy Resurrection). Anyone who would like to help with this joyous and historic celebration in any way should contact Barbara (Gabriel) Clarke at 802-496-5780 or metanoia@madriver.com.

Workdays will be held on a Saturday still to be determined and Wednesday, March 7, beginning at 10 a.m. Watch for the announcement.

More Good News! Iconographer Dmitri Andreyev plans to begin and complete the large icon of the Theotokos (*Platytera*) over the altar this month in time for the ordination. Please pray for his work.

GREAT LENT IS ALMOST HERE

✝ The first Sunday in February is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, when we begin our return to the Father and find ourselves welcomed Home. Feb. 11, the Sunday of the Last Judgment, also called Meatfare Sunday, is the last day before Great Lent for eating meat. It is permitted during this week to eat milk and eggs on every day of the week, including Wednesday and Friday. The 18th, Forgiveness Sunday, begins Great Lent. At St. Jacob's, we mark this day with a potluck blinyi brunch after Liturgy (to use up all the cheese and eggs!), followed by Forgiveness Vespers and the ritual of mutual forgiveness that is so central to our life as Orthodox Christians.

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Enemies in the Psalms

Subdn. Don Sheehan began our Thursday night study of Psalms by focusing on Psalm 83 (LXX 82), in which David, having begged God to punish his enemies, concludes:

Fill their faces with shame, O Lord,
And they shall seek after Your name.
May they be disgraced and dismayed
Unto ages of ages,
May they be confounded and destroyed,
So that they may know
That your name is Lord,
That You alone are Most High
Over all the earth.

Our first response to enmity—and the Psalms tell us that our enemies are real ones—must be to *pray*. We do this, not in despair or helplessness, but in the knowledge that we are praying to a God who has bound Himself to us in promises to help us. Prayer *is* the battle, not merely a preparation for it. In acting to avenge ourselves against our enemies, or in collapsing before them in terror, we are forgetting God. For the enemies are God's, not ours; and He has promised to defeat them.

This warfare against enemies, inward or outward, Subdn. Don told us, requires from us compunction, deep repentance, the state of becoming *simultaneously conscious of our own sinfulness and of God's forgiveness*, a state of sorrow and tenderness that crushes passions and fills our soul with blessed joy. For even harsh things restore our deepest intimacy with God.

Over and over, Psalms teach us this.

In the second session, Subdn. Don began by saying that the deepest wound inflicted by an enemy is fear, which breaks our connection to prayer, and even to the experience of being alive. This is what the Psalms mean by “going down into the pit.” In our time, we call it depression, though the psalmic answer is not the same as the psychological one.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Treatise on the Psalms*, refers to Phil. 3, where St. Paul urges us to forget the things behind us and reach forward to the things ahead. This is the key to the psalmic way out of afflictions—pressing on, *epectasis*. The very arrangement of psalms in the Psalter shows us a continual movement toward blessedness. The final psalm (150) fulfills every earthly and heavenly urgency perfectly.

Subdn. Don ended the session with this quote from Kovalevsky's *Life of St. Sergius*: “Sergius entered the church to sing Matins one night. When he began to sing, the wall of the church suddenly opened and the devil entered, accompanied by a multitude of his servants. They attacked the blessed one, gnashing their teeth and taunting him, ‘Flee from this place or we will destroy you and you will die at our hands.’ Armed with prayer, the saint said in a loud voice, ‘Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered.’”

The third and final session of “Enemies in the Psalms” focused on Ps. 102 (LXX 101): “A Prayer of a Poor Man, When he is depressed and pours out his supplication before the Lord.” If creating fear is the enemy's chief goal, his primary weapon is what Subdn. Don called “the sword of depression,” and our only true protection is the shield of supplicatory prayer. In the course of this psalm, the way is plainly shown of deflecting the enemy's sword through a uniquely psalmic prayer.

SCHEDULE FOR ST. JACOB ORTHODOX CHURCH DURING FEBRUARY

Feb. 1	6 p.m.	Reader's Vigil for the Feast of the Meeting in the Temple	Feb. 17	11 a.m.	Baptismal Liturgy for Nadia Chudzik; Fr. Mark S. and Fr. Peter Benyo
Feb. 2	9 a.m.	Obednitsa for the Feast		5 p.m.	Reader's Great Vespers
Feb. 3	5 p.m.	Reader's Great Vespers	Feb. 18	9:30 a.m.	Divine Liturgy and Forgiveness Vespers (Lent begins)
Feb. 4	9:30 a.m.	Festal Divine Liturgy Fr. Mark Korban			Fr. Mark Korban
Feb. 6	5:30 p.m.	Vespers and Parish Council Fr. Andrew Tregubov	Feb. 19	6 p.m.	Great Canon (reader service)
Feb. 8	5:30 p.m.	Vespers and Discussion Fr. Mark Sherman/Subdn. John Konkle	Feb. 21	6 p.m.	Great Canon (reader service)
Feb. 10	5 p.m.	Reader's Great Vespers	Feb. 22	6 p.m.	Great Canon (reader service)
Feb. 11	9:30 a.m.	Divine Liturgy , Fr. Mark K.	Feb. 24	5 p.m.	Reader's Great Vespers
Feb. 12–16		Cheesefare Week: Meat fast	Feb. 25	9:30 a.m.	Divine Liturgy , Fr. Mark K.
Feb. 15	5:30 p.m.	Vespers and Discussion Fr. Mark S./Subdn. John	Feb. 26	5:30 p.m.	Readers Vespers for St. Raphael of Brooklyn
			Feb. 28	6 p.m.	Presanctified Liturgy



A JOURNEY NONE CAN TAKE ALONE

The message of the [Forgiveness] Sunday Gospel (Matthew 6:14-21) is re-enacted in visible form through the ceremony of mutual forgiveness that takes place at the end of Vespers on the same day. The monastic superior or parish priest kneels before the congregation, asking pardon and saying, "Forgive me, a sinner"; and then the others kneel before him, each saying the same words. The forgiveness is on a one-to-one basis... then the members of the congregation go round the church and kneel individually before one another, requesting and transmitting pardon.

The ceremony of mutual forgiveness, so far from being merely a ritual form, can be and often is a profoundly moving moment, altering the lives of those who participate. Symbolic gestures of this kind have a decisive effect. I can recall occasions when this exchange of forgiveness on the threshold of Lent has served as a forceful catalyst, suddenly breaking down long-standing barriers and making possible a true re-creation of relationship. What the Vespers of Forgiveness surely proclaims, in actions that speak louder than words, is that the Lenten voyage is a journey which none can undertake alone.

—Bishop Kallistos (Ware), *Lent and the Consumer Society*

THE BODY MUST GATHER

St. Jacob parishioners were blessed on December 31 with a wonderful meeting with Fr. Andrew of Holy Resurrection in Claremont, and Dn. Caleb. Much of what we discussed is already history, but there is one thing we all need to keep with us:

The most important thing for us to do in this time of transition in our parish life, Fr. Andrew said, is to *be faithful*. The extraordinary experience that our parish has had under Fr. Mark's leadership will go bad and dissipate if we don't come to church. We need to live and express and *give* that experience now. The priest is the focus through which the icon of Christ is being built, but he needs the entire community in order to do this. Now the anchor of faithfulness is shifting, for a while, to the community itself. The body must gather. Dn. Caleb added that we have a powerful opportunity at this time to learn about the meaning of Church.

OPEN LETTER TO FATHER MARK

Father, it is amazing. We are pulling together with and in the strength of the Spirit. I am befriended by all, and most of us, if not all, are still trouping down... Father, the parish is making saints. In a way, I think your presence elsewhere has opened the door for us, and for the Spirit. I refuse to say you're not there...but as we are in communion, you are still very much a part of what is happening, while people who are in great need are served. And can I say, maybe if we hold you all in prayer they will be helped by our health? I hesitate to say anything, because I speak far too freely while my conscience is sore and bruised. But I guess I didn't hesitate. Also, God Himself is behind you. He opened the door, He will give you what you need. Anna Konkle and I were talking about the snow. I had planned to travel to Myrrhbearers, and she had something planned, and there is the snow, totally unconcerned for either plan. But, I think, more concerned than we can ever understand as yet...except that it's concerned in the patience of God...Make the most of the snow!

—Alexis Kyriak

REPORT ON CHRISTMAS GIVING

Saint Nicholas and his helpers were busy at St. Jacob's this Christmas. Seven families (with 20 children) received boxes of gifts. Six families received Christmas meals. Ten teenagers in the Northfield area received gift certificates for clothes from us through the CERV Christmas project. About 20 boxes of homemade goodies went out to people in need of holiday cheer. A Moscow orphanage received \$100 to purchase gifts for its children. The Charity Committee wishes to thank the parish community, without whose generous help none of this would have been possible.

The St. Jacob Charity Committee works steadily throughout the year, on a small budget, helping many who are in need in the local area and abroad. If you become aware of someone in need who could be helped by our assistance, or if you wish to help in the committee's work, please make contact with Susanna Toolan at 229-0093.

ST. JACOB PARISH EXTENDS ITS SYMPATHIES to Rachel Hebert-Cyr, whose mother, Rose, fell asleep in the Lord on January 15; and to the family of Brian Wrigley, the good friend who did so much of the remodeling of our church, who passed away suddenly on January 17.

ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER...

You can follow the Abetti family through their last (and previous) months at seminary by logging on to the Holy Resurrection website, www.broc.org, where Dn. Caleb and Nicole contribute an ongoing journal as parish seminarians. This is the most recent entry.

Well we're back in the castle at St. Vlads and it's good to be back. Good friends, lots to learn, nyc and stress. St. Vlads is very much a crossroads for people of the Orthodox faith. I know that sounds cheesy but it really is true. If something is related to the Church or wants to be related to the Church, chances are someone at St. Vlads knows about it or is the perpetrator him/herself. Anyway I look forward to these few, brief months until graduation. More on my courses later...

Many of you have heard or are responsible for the fact that Nicki and I and the kids are going to be the priestly family of St. Jacob of Alaska Church in Northfield Falls, VT. We are very wonderfully excited and joyful about all this. In

fact it is no easy task keeping our minds here in tuckahoe ny when really we want to be there getting to know you people of the Church there. Of course the great thing about being here for the next few months is the fact that absence makes the heart grow fonder and (this is really what I mean by the 'good thing') I have four months to learn how to baptize Meghan and Kirill's soon to be born baby.

God willing, the date of my ordination to the priesthood is March 10th, a Saturday, at 9:30 a.m. at St. Jacob Church with His Grace Bishop Nikon presiding. All are welcome.

I hope to write on this page as much as possible this semester since I will no longer be able to be one of HROC's "seminarians"—only good things last forever (no one wants to be seminarian forever!). Again another tasteless joke.

—dn. caleb

A Tithing of the Year

We offer to God in sacrifice a tenth part of the year, and with this tithe we offer ourselves, our whole life, all our days and hours. This offering of self and time, if it is to be meaningful, needs to be costly: "I will not offer to the Lord my God that which has cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). Any true observance of Lent commits us to an effort that is at times painful, involving as it does a degree of self-denial that goes far beyond our normal inclinations. Yet this does not mean that Lent is predominantly a period of gloom and self-mortification. Our Christian feast of tithes, like the Jewish harvest-offering of the first fruits, is a time of rejoicing.

Sacrifice, that is to say, is not primarily a matter of *giving up* but of *giving*. The main emphasis falls not on what we deny ourselves, but upon what we offer to God and to our neighbors. And the effect of making our gift to God—a gift which God then accepts—is to reestablish the personal relationship between ourselves and Him. Such exactly is the aim of all sacrificial giving: to restore communion. This notion of Lent as a time to restore relationships needs to be kept constantly in view...

How shall we apply to ourselves individually this understanding of Lent as an offering of tithes? We can apply it first of all to money... That, however, is no more than a beginning: for God invites us to offer not merely what we have but what we are. We are to give our time as well as our money.

More intensively than at other periods of the year, we are to set apart time for God through prayer, and time for our neighbor through acts of service—visiting the sick, the housebound and the lonely, inviting the stranger to our home, catching up on our backlog of letters and writing to all those whom we have been too long neglecting. Could we not offer to God in this way at least a tithe of our waking hours: say, twelve hours each week of Lent?

—Bishop Kallistos (Ware), *Lent and the Consumer Society*

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