

St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

March - April 2021

From the Life of Holy Hieromartyr Hilarion (Troitsky)

Living in Solovki, Archbishop Hilarion preserved all those good qualities of soul that he had gained through his ascetic labors, both before and during his monastic life and as a priest and hierarch. Those who lived with him during those years were witnesses to his total monastic non-acquisitiveness, deep simplicity, true humility, and childlike meekness. He simply gave away everything he had when asked. He took no interest in his own things. That is why he needed someone to watch after his suitcase, out of mercy for him. He did have such an assistant at Solovki. Archbishop Hilarion could be insulted but he would never answer back; he might not even notice the attempt to insult him. He was always cheerful, and even if he was worried or distressed, he always tried to cover it up quickly with his cheerfulness. He looked at everything with spiritual eyes, and everything served for his spiritual profit.

“At the Philemonov fishery,” one eyewitness related, “four and a half miles from the Solovki kremlin and main camp, on the shores of the small White Sea bay, Archbishop Hilarion and I, along with two other bishops and a few priests (all prisoners), were netmakers and fishermen. Archbishop Hilarion loved to talk about this work of ours using a rearrangement of the words of the sticheron for Pentecost: ‘All things are given by the Holy Spirit: before, fishermen became theologians, and now it’s the opposite—theologians have become fishermen.’” Thus did he humble himself before his new lot. His good spirits extended also to the Soviet authorities themselves, and he was able to view even them with guileless eyes.

Once, a young hieromonk was brought to Solovki from Kazan. He had been sentenced to three years of exile for removing the orarion^[9] from a renovationist deacon, and not allowing the deacon to celebrate with him. The Archbishop approved of the hieromonk’s action, and joked about the various prison terms given to one or another person, having nothing to do with the seriousness of their “crime.” “For the Master

is gracious and receives the last, even as the first,” he said in the words of St. John Chrysostom’s Paschal homily. “He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour, just as to him who has labored from the first. He has mercy upon the last and cares for the first; to the one he gives, and to the other he is gracious. He both honors the work and praises the intention.” These words may have sounded ironic, but they imparted a feeling of peace, and made the hieromonk accept the trial as from God’s hands.

Vladyka Hilarion was greatly cheered by the thought that Solovki was a school of the virtues—non-acquisitiveness, meekness, humility, temperance, patience, and love of labor. One day a group of clergy was robbed upon arrival, and the fathers were very upset. One of the prisoners said to them in jest that this is how they were being taught non-acquisitiveness. Vladyka was elated by that remark. One exile lost his boots twice in a row, and walked around the camp in torn galoshes. Archbishop Hilarion was brought to unfeigned merriness looking at him, and that is how he encouraged good humor in the other prisoners.

His love for every person, his attention to each one, and his sociability were simply amazing. He was the most popular individual in the camp, among all of its societal classes. We are saying not only that the general, the officer, the student, and the professor knew him and talked with him (in spite of the fact that there were many bishops there, even older, and no less educated than he), but also the rabble, the criminal society of thieves and bandits, knew him as a good, respected person, whom it was impossible not to love. Whether during work-breaks or during his free time, he could be seen walking around arm in arm with one or another “example” of this crowd. This was not just condescension toward a “younger brother” or a fallen man—no. Vladyka spoke with each one as an equal, taking an interest in, for example, the “profession,” or favorite activity of each of

them. The criminal element is very proud and sensitively conceited. They cannot be slighted with impunity. Therefore, Vladyka's manner overcame everything. Like a friend to them, he ennobled them by his presence and attention. It was exceptionally interesting to observe him in that crowd, talking things over with them.

He was accessible to all; he was just like everyone, and it was easy to be around him, to meet with him and talk. The most ordinary, simple, and "non-saintly" exterior—that was Vladyka. However, behind this ordinary exterior of joy and seeming worldliness, one could gradually begin to see childlike purity, vast spiritual experience, kindness and mercy, his sweet indifference to material goods, his true faith, authentic piety, and lofty moral perfection—not to mention intellectual strength combined with strength and clarity of conviction. This appearance of ordinary sinfulness, foolishness-for-Christ, and a mask of worldliness hid his inner activity from people, and preserved him from hypocrisy and conceit. He was the sworn enemy of hypocrisy and all manner of "pious appearance," and was absolutely conscious and direct. In the "Troitsky crew" (that is what they called Archbishop Hilarion's work group) the clergy received a good education on Solovki. Everyone understood that there was no point in just calling yourself a sinner, carrying on long, pious conversations, or showing how austere you lived. It was especially useless to think more highly of yourself than was actually the case.

Vladyka would ask every arriving priest in detail about the events leading up to his imprisonment. One day, a certain abbot was brought to Solovki. The Archbishop asked him, "What did they arrest you for?"

"Oh, I served molebens at home after they closed the monastery," the abbot replied. "Well, people would gather, and there were even some healings ..."

"Ah, well—even healings ... How much Solovki did they give you?"

"Three years."

"Well," said Vladyka, "that's not much; for healings they should have given you more. The Soviet government made an oversight ..."

It goes without saying that it was more than immodest to speak about healings coming through one's own prayers.

In mid summer of 1925, Archbishop Hilarion was sent to the prison in Yaroslavl. There it was very dif-

ferent from Solovki. He had special privileges there. He was allowed to receive spiritual books. Taking advantage of these privileges, Archbishop Hilarion read a great deal of patristic literature and kept notes, which resulted in many thick notebooks of patristic instruction. He was able to send these notebooks to his friends for safekeeping after passing the prison censor. The hierarch would secretly visit the prison warden, who was a kind man, and as a result he made an underground collection of religious manuscripts and Soviet literature, as well as copies of various Church-administrative documents and correspondence with bishops.

During that time, Archbishop Hilarion also courageously bore a slew of troubles. When he was in Yaroslavl prison, the Gregorian schism[10] was occurring within the Russian Church's bosom. An agent from the GPU came to him since he was a popular bishop, and tried to persuade him to join the new schism. "Moscow loves you—Moscow is waiting for you," the agent said to him. But Archbishop Hilarion remained steadfast. He could see what the GPU was trying to do, and he courageously rejected the sweet freedom offered him in exchange for his betrayal. The agent was amazed at his courage and said, "It's nice to speak with such an intelligent man." Then he added, "How long is your term on Solovki? Three years?! For Hilarion—only three years?! So little?" It is not surprising that three more years were added to Archbishop Hilarion's sentence after this. The statement "for spreading government secrets" was also added; that is—for talking about his conversation with the agent in the Yaroslavl prison.

from orthochristian.com

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. The parish newsletter is published bi-monthly under the direction of the Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15th of the month prior to publication to Father Michael at frmichael@stxenia.org. Thank you.

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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment.

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Trapeza Schedule

*Organized Trapeza is on hold for the foreseeable future.
We all look forward to the day we can gather again after Liturgy!*



PARISH NEWS

Please Remember in Your Prayers ~

Jane Rockwell, Peter and Dorothea Danas, Dimitri Nikshych, Laryssa Doohovskoy, and Matushka Anna.

Please be sure to inform the Sisterhood if someone is in the hospital or shut in at home.

Congratulations!

To Elena Cutler and family on their new baby boy, Ivan Tiger, born February 9 and Alla Caico and family on their new baby girl, Rosalie Xenia, born February 13.

We ask God's blessings and many years to all!

Attending Liturgy ~

In consideration of capacity limitations due to Covid, sign-ups continue to be made available for Liturgy. There is no sign-up required for Vigil. To sign-up, please go to:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0548a5ae2fa64-stxenial>

Services will continue to be live-streamed from our YouTube Channel. The link is on our website.

Choir News ~

If you have a private service - wedding, baptism, funeral, etc. – and would like to have choir singers, please contact Laryssa at stxenichoira@gmail.com.

Building Expansion ~

We are making some headway on our church expansion project. When we applied for our building permit in September we were met with an unforeseen obstacle: the City of Methuen has our church building appraised at \$238k, likely the cost of building it 25 years ago. Since our expansion project is far above 30% of this amount, we are subject to 100% compliance regarding ADA access in the entire structure. This would require, among other things, elevators to both the choir loft and the loft over the kitchen--and many other things. We attempted to get a variance on at least some of these things but found that we were unprepared to answer all their questions. We have had to completely abandon the West extension of the entry and overhead choir loft to have any chance of being granted variance.

We have since contracted with an Andover architectural firm, LAGRASSE YANOWITZ & FEYL

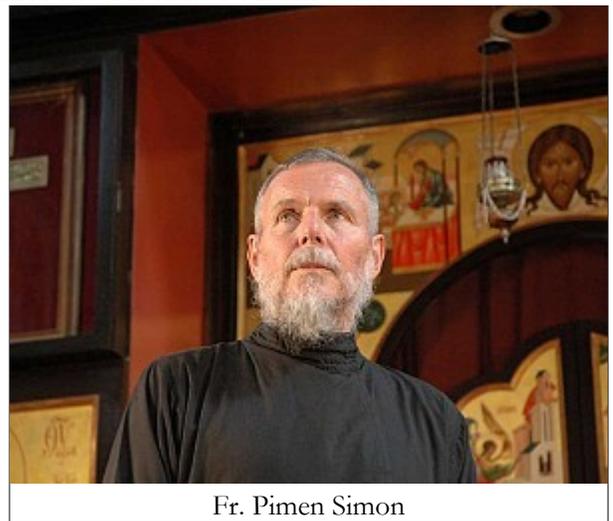
ARCHITECTS, to get us through the variance requests and ultimately provide complete construction documents for our builder.

We hope to have this completed in the March-April time frame so that we can break ground and get the project accomplished.

DIOCESE NEWS

FACES OF THE DIOCESE

"THE WAY WE SERVE IS OUR MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH GOD" – AN INTERVIEW WITH ARCHPRIEST PIMEN SIMON



Fr. Pimen himself can't remember when the Old Believer Soloviev family began to use the surname Simon. Neither did his father, Eustathius. On the other hand, Fr. Pimen remembers well that he and his Matushka Maria and their children and grandchildren have attended the Church of the Nativity of Christ in Erie, PA, on the banks of the Great Lake of the same name, their entire lives.

The parish of the Nativity of Christ Church was founded in 1916 by Russian Old Believer immigrants who arrived to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

"The founders of our parish – bezpopovtsy [priestless] Pomorians – came from the Pskov region and Novgorod and fled to the western edge of Russia, to the area between the cities of Svalki and Seina, on the territory of modern Poland, in the 18th century due to persecution," says parish rector Archpriest Pimen Simon. "And from there they began to immigrate to the U.S. in the late 1880s."

Many of the Old Believers who came to America settled in Erie, where at that time you could find work in paper mills and on the docks on the waterfront of Lake Erie, to the north of the current lo-

cation of the church, and also in the mines and steel mills of Pittsburgh and the surrounding cities in Pennsylvania.

By 1916, so many Old Believer families had settled in this area that the leaders of the community decided to build a church. The first church, built in 1919, was dedicated in honor of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, and the first *nastavnik* was Nikon Pantsirev – he accepted the role of spiritual leader of the community in 1923.

In the early years of the parish, the Old Believer traditions remained intact, and the members of the community preserved the Russian language. However, after the Second World War, there was an "Americanization" of the parish. The men began to shave their beards, the women – to cut their hair, and later they stopped wearing the traditional colorful *sarafans* [sundresses]. The children began to speak mainly English.

"During the Great Depression, many Old Believers went to Detroit, where they hoped to find work," continues Fr. Pimen. "In the early 1960s, the Tolstoy Fund found money and 'extracted' Old Believers from Turkey to the U.S. who had gone there from China, which was becoming communist. The largest group of Old Believers settled in New Jersey, but many considered these places too Americanized and moved to Oregon, and others even farther – to Alaska, where they founded their own city, Nikolaevsk, in 1968. The community in Alaska is the largest and most developing today due to the preservation of the traditions and family life. They live separately there, like their counterparts in Siberia. Small groups of Old Believers in Alaska recognized the priesthood but are not in communion with the Orthodox throughout the whole world and do not recognize the Russian Orthodox Church.

"The majority of the Old Believer communities in the U.S. are small: The parish in Detroit only serves Vigil occasionally, and there are almost no services in Millville, NJ. With the Old Believers who broke away from our community, whose church is a block away, the 105-year-old *nastavnik* also rarely does the services."



The Nativity of Christ Church celebrated its 100th anniversary this year. The celebration of the jubilee was led by the First Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America & New York.

"In 1976, when I became the *nastavnik* of what was still a priestless Old Believer community at the time, I realized the parish would diminish over time," recalls Fr. Pimen. "The third generation is no longer very devoted to the Church. At that point, we had 400 parishioners, and earlier we had up to 600, but many came just on Nativity and Pascha. They considered themselves strict *bezpopovtsy*, but didn't keep the fasts.

"Now we have a stable 175-200 parishioners, the majority of which regularly come to church. There are many converts.

"The parish has a Sunday School with the children learning the Law of God and *Znamenny* chant. I would like if some of the youth would study Church Slavonic, which we use together with English in the services."



Brandon Mathers

One of the regular young parishioners is Brandon Mathers, an engineer. We met in the city early Saturday morning, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ Church's patronal feast. He made the two-hour drive from Pittsburgh, and I – eight hours from New York to make it to the festal services.

Brandon first encountered the Orthodox Church at his friends' wedding, almost three years ago when he was studying in college; he was a Catholic at that time. The Orthodox services immediately attracted him. After college, he worked in Tennessee, where he went to a parish of the Orthodox Church in America, and after a 13-month catechumenate, he converted to Orthodoxy. Having returned to Pittsburgh, he met a family that went to the services in Erie, and so he went to the Old Believer church for the first time.

Brandon has been going there on Sundays and feast days for almost two years now. He has grown a beard and wears an Old Believer embroidered shirt. He likes the Old Believers' adherence to the traditions of the services, the fullness of the All-Night Vigil, the order, the melodious chants, and the warmth of hospitality of his spiritual friends. He doesn't presume, but hopes to find an Orthodox wife for himself.

Today, the majority of Old Believers wear modern clothing in their everyday lives, and on Sundays and feast days the men wear a sectioned shirt embroidered at the collar in church. The women wear a white

handkerchief in church, and in Erie the parishioners no longer pin it in front, but simply tie it, like Orthodox women in Russia.

It has become a new phenomenon in the communities for the youth to marry people of other faiths and nationalities. The young people themselves choose their other half; the parents do not interfere in this process, and the age of marriage is increasing, both for the young women and young men. The majority of Americans who marry Old Believers accept their faith.



– In your view, what is the purpose and mission of the Old Rite in the modern world?

– We are not a museum showpiece in the modern world. The way we serve is our means of communicating with God. We use English instead of Slavonic, and that is also part of the means of communicating with God. When I became the *nastavnik* in 1976, I wasn't planning to do the services in English. But time goes on, and our parishioners change.

The young families said they don't understand the Slavonic services, so they didn't want to go to church. It was very painful for me to switch to English. This was in 1979. It nearly started a war in the parish. Many people said to me: "How can you allow yourself to do this?" They called me "Terrible Pimen." We met and discussed it several times, and the main thing was to keep the parish viable. But without transitioning to English as the main language of the services, and then the restoration of the priesthood and a return to the full practice of the Sacraments and rites, we wouldn't be able to exist.

Finally, after much discussion and reflection, it was decided that the parish had to gradually introduce English as a liturgical language. In 1980, beginning with the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, we began to do the services with a small amount of English.

But we needed translations of the liturgical texts, and here Fr. [Abbot] German (Ciuba) helped us. Now Old Believers use his translation of the prayer book in both Americas, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of Southeast Asia. Commentary on the Sacred Scriptures, the Octoechos, the Torzhestvennik, the Festal Menaion, and

the majority of the Lenten and Paschal Triodion have also been translated.

But translations are only part of what we needed. We couldn't do without arranging the English texts of the hymns for the ancient *Znamenny* chant. My brother, Deacon Mitrophan, took on this task. He arranged many of the hymns, adapting them to English as they would sound in Church Slavonic.

An even more controversial decision came two years later. After a careful study of the schism in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th century and the subsequent loss of the priesthood and reading the works of the Holy Fathers, Fr. Pimen came to the conclusion that the parish should do everything possible to reunite with the fullness of the Orthodox Church, to have a bishop and priest in the parish. In 1982, a small research committee was formed, as a result of which, on January 9, 1983, a parish-wide vote was held. About eighty percent of the parish voted for unification with the Russian Church Abroad.

– When I first thought about our community becoming *popovtzi* (Edinovertsi), I went to Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville to investigate how serious the "Nikonians" were about receiving us and respecting the Old Rite. I met a hieromonk there – Fr. Hilarion (today Metropolitan Hilarion, the First Hierarch of ROCOR). I sat with him near the monastery church. He spoke with me with such love and respect that I thought there was a real chance at reconciliation.

In 1981, we went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and during the service in the Ascension Monastery on the Mt. of Olives, it became completely clear to me that we had to restore the fullness of communion with the Orthodox Church.

In the fall of 1982, when our research committee was finishing its work, we decided to go under the omophorion of the Russian Church Abroad.

On July 24, 1983, Fr. Pimen was ordained as a priest by Archbishop Laurus (Škurla, later the Metropolitan; † 2008), and the Church of the Nativity of Christ was finally consecrated. During the Dormition Fast in 1983, Fr. Pimen baptized more than 500 parishioners.

In 1984, the world-famous iconographer Fr. Theodore Jurewicz joined the parish and continued beautifying the church, painting many icons.

The restoration of the priesthood and the transition to ROCOR was a very difficult task. I knew that many from our parish were ready to kill me. About a quarter of the parish left us. When they started serving (a block away from us), I would weep during the Liturgy because I had lost them.

– Fr. Pimen, what do you value in your parishioners?

– We have a tight-knit community, united by devotion to the Faith and the parish. Throughout all these years, the people have tried to keep the commandments that the Savior gave us.

Unfortunately, we are, with few exceptions, not Russians, and our parish can no longer be called a Russian Orthodox parish. The majority of Russians in Erie are Baptists or Pentecostals – *Fr. Pimen says with sorrow* – and that’s despite the fact that the clergy and parishioners are very hospitable to one another and to newcomers.

Russian-speaking people still come now, but they light a candle, kiss an icon, and leave. They come to baptize their child, and I ask: "Where are you from?" "Erie." "How many years have you been living here?" "Three years." So why didn't I see them all that time? I ask them to come to Liturgy for four weeks. They leave, and I never see them again.

On the other hand, Ethiopians and one Indian woman attend here. We have Italians, Germans, Poles, Irish, and French at our parish who have converted to Orthodoxy.

I ask my parishioners: Who are we? We are Americans of the Orthodox Faith, serving according to the Old Rite. Some people come here and hope to see the same kind of Old Believers who live in isolation in Siberia. But we are Americans, and we don't pretend to be anything else, we don't adjust for the Russians. And if we weren't who we are, we certainly wouldn't have survived in our times, especially in a place like Erie. It's not New York or Washington. There aren't many Russian-speaking immigrants here, and if we're not open to people of other nationalities, we will cease to exist.

Our parishioners are much more responsive and loyal than those who have come to our city lately from the countries of the former Soviet Union. There was a time when our church was surrounded by unsightly buildings. We had begun to take care of the internal beautification and splendor of our church and didn't want the church to be in such a terrible environment. I appealed to our parishioners with a request to help the church buy these houses and put them in order. Within three weeks the people had collected \$500,000. All in all, we spent \$900,000 to repair these houses.

Parishioners showed the same devotion when there was a fire in the church. On July 22, 1986, in the afternoon, as the parish was preparing to receive participants in a conference it was hosting, smoke started billowing from an opening in the ceiling above the choir.

After several hours of fighting the fire, everyone was surprised to find that the Royal Doors and deacons' doors, the iconostasis, icons,

books, altar, and vestments in it miraculously remained undamaged. The new church was completed by the following summer.



– Fr. Pimen, tell us about your family.

– I have a wonderful family. My wife is Mary, of Irish descent. She was Catholic, and was baptized Orthodox in honor of St. Mary Magdalene. We have an interesting tradition in the Old Rite. The only woman known as "Maria" is the Mother of God. The rest are Mary. Thus, my Mary, disappointed with Catholicism, started coming to our church while studying in college. Our parish was priestless at that time. I knew her from church. Then I left for college and I was gone for four years. Mary went to church this whole time. My father asked me: "Why aren't you married?" And soon we got married.

We have three children: Daria, John, Katerina. We were lucky with them: They never said they didn't want to go to church and they are all still active in the parish, spending a lot of time in the church, and helping with absolutely everything, from singing on the kliros, to the parish website, to social work. At the same time, they all have secular jobs. Daria is the CEO of a company, John is the director of communications for a large insurance company, and Katerina teaches for an online college.

We have four grandchildren. The oldest sings on the kliros and reads. Our youngest grandson, Joshua, really loves church and always serves during the services. He could even stand through a four-hour service when he was four years old.

Old Believer children generally behave exemplarily in church. If to characterize the behavior of both adult parishioners and children in an Old Believer church, in a word – order. It is unacceptable for us for children to run around the church during the services, screaming. On the other hand, we perhaps lose newly-arriving Russian-speak-

ers because of this. They think Old Believers are a fanatical people.

I remember from childhood, when I was ten – we were priestless at that time – we would serve Vespers on the eve of Pascha. We began at 3:00 PM and served until 5:30. Then we served Compline with the rite of the burial of the shroud until 8:00. Then we read the long canon and finished the service at 3:30 AM. I remember I would stand without sitting until early morning.

I'm a happy man, and one of the reasons is that my entire family is active in church. I was brought up prudently, and I relate to my children and grandchildren the same way.

My children spend Saturday evenings and Sundays in church. Before that we play golf, go to the movies. On Sunday, when the Liturgy ends, I often go shopping or to the lake with my grandkids. They don't address me in English, but call me "Deda."

If you ask me what worries me most in life, I would say it's that this church would continue to live for many years and serve future generations. The church is the heart of my life. That's how it's always been. After finishing law school in Pittsburgh, I returned to Erie because of the church. My daughter Daria's husband is a lawyer. They were both offered work in Pittsburgh, with a salary three times higher than in our city. But they gave it up and also returned here – because of the church.

A significant event for the parish was the consecration on August 14, 1988 of Fr. Dmitry (Alexandrov) as a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia specifically for the Old Believers, tonsured into monasticism the night before with the name Daniel.

– Fr. Pimen, how would you define the role of Bishop Daniel for your parish and Old Believers in America as a whole?

– Vladyka Daniel's main role was in "guarding" the Old Believers' liturgical practices. Although he himself was not an Old Believer, he felt how important it was for the Church to preserve the Old Rite. Vladyka would say: "Your ancestors died to preserve these services, ancient chants, and their melodies. As it's written in the books, so you serve. What you have is unique, and you should preserve it. If someone doesn't want to, they can leave, but nothing needs to be changed."

Even before his episcopacy, Vladyka was a very versatile man. He was a remarkable architect and iconographer, and a man of great spirituality and prayer. He also loved sailing. Many years ago, when he moved to Erie, he even built a boat that he intended to go sailing on. He had a great interest in cannons and weapons. He had a cannon at his house and he would shoot it on July 4, on Independence Day. He

knew many kinds of chant—Kievan, *Znamenny*, Romanian, Byzantine; he spoke many languages.

He really was an outstanding man of the Church. Unfortunately, when Vladyka Daniel became a bishop, he was already very sick.

– Fr. Pimen, how do you see the future of the parish?

– It will be difficult, for a number of reasons. First: the growing secularization of society, and we, as part of American society, are subject to this secularization. Second: we are a very small minority. Third: we are no longer a Russian community and Russians will no longer come here for the most part, especially if they are not rooted in the Faith.

The biggest problem is that our children with higher education cannot find work in Erie. If my own children or grandchildren can leave in the future, how can I ask other parishioners to stay?

When I was a lawyer and not yet a *nastavnik*, the situation in the parish was difficult; but I knew that if we didn't begin to serve in English and didn't receive the priesthood, then by the time I was 50-55, the parish would die. Nevertheless, we chose correctly, and our parish is growing and developing.

Right now, we have about 100-150 parishioners. Ten or fifteen years ago, we had about 25 funerals a year, and now we have an average of five, while at the same time we get about five new parishioners a year. People come, they like the services. I'm in favor of our young people bringing their significant others to church. So the parish is stable now. Of course, we won't have 400 people like before, but the parish will live.

We understand that the main purpose of the Church and parish is the salvation of the soul. At the same time, we participate and engage in various social programs. I myself participate in various organizations and groups of our region and city.

Every year, four or five churches in our city give their parish premises for homeless people to stay there for two weeks before and after Western Christmas. Every day during this time, our parishioners work with the homeless in shifts: 7:00-11:00 at night, 11:00-3:00 in the afternoon, and 3:00-7:00 in the evening. We lay out mats in our church center's sports hall and we cook breakfast and lunch for the homeless. The homeless shelter is run by my youngest daughter Katerina.

Every Friday and on Western Christmas, we work in a soup kitchen for the poor, which is sponsored by the Benedictines. On Western Christmas, we also deliver baskets with groceries to 40-60 families, so they'll have

enough food for the feast. We have a food bank, and we deliver food to the needy every week.

During the Nativity Fast, we have a Christmas party for about 150 needy people, the majority of whom are from homeless families who have nothing; therefore, we try to give them something during Western Christmas.



We have the project of Matthew Gregorov, "Shoe Tree," in which we buy shoes for needy students.

We make sure that the state of our region doesn't deteriorate, so it doesn't degenerate. We try to clean the area of slums, we buy houses and repair and restore them, and we build new buildings. We want our church to be in a safe environment. It's important for us to keep the area clean and tidy.

The church and all this property belong to the parish. The parish chooses the priest itself, so our labors will not be lost.

– And how has your area and Erie as a whole changed in the last, let's say, 40 years?

– Erie is a Rust Belt city, which also includes cities in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Forty years ago, it was an ugly, dirty city. Such cities had to either transform or die. Erie began to transform, and today it is a dynamic city: instead of paper manufacturing and shipbuilding, we have large high-tech companies and insurance and tourist companies, where our young people work.

Everyone in Erie knows our church with the golden domes in the bay front area on the shore of Lake Erie. I already knew when I was studying in school that this church was a unique place, that there is something special in it. It absolutely must be preserved, and this is the work of the youth.

I tell the youth: I'm not some freak who knows nothing about the modern world. I played sports for many years when I was young: track, polo, baseball. I dated girls. And I went to church. When I had a legal practice, I also went to church. When I became the *nastavnik*, I would wear the

embroidered shirt instead of a suit and go to church. So don't say you have work and other things to do.

To this day, I love to read and I try to keep track of what's going on in the world. My homilies are often connected with current events, and I refer to what I read in the *New York Times* or *Time Magazine*.

I work with a group of 20- and 21-year-olds. I tell them to get an education, come back, find a spouse in church, get married, give birth to three children, and the parish will live!

Tatiana Veselkina

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LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The Monk Kirill (Cyril) of Astrakhan (*Commemorated March 18/March 31*) was archimandrite of the Trinity monastery in Astrakhan. He had been sent as hegumen to the newly-built monastery in the year 1568. The monk constructed at the monastery temples in honour of the MostHoly Trinity, the Entry of the MostHoly Mother of God into the Temple, and Saint Nicholas. He zealously concerned himself with the enlightening of the Astrakhan region, and by his meekness and piety he gained the respect of even the Mahometans, -- who called him the Kara-Daud (the Black David) in distinction from the holy Prophet King David. The monk died in about the year 1576. The icon of the saint was written in 1676 through a vow of Emel'yan Paphent'ev, whom the Monk Kirill had saved when he was drowning in the Volga. The Vita (Life of the saint was compiled in the year 1790, and a tropar and kondak to him is known. The Church established the feastday in memory of the Monk Kirill under 18 March [probably on the basis of his name-in-common with Saint Cyril of Jerusalem].

Sainted Sophronii, Bishop of Irkutsk and Wonder-Worker of all Siberia, (*Commemorated March 17/March 30*) known under the family-name Kristalevsky, was born in Malorussia in the Chernigov region in 1704. His father, Nazarii Fedorovich, was "a common man in his affairs, and Sophronii they named Stefan", in honour of the first-martyr archdeacon Stephen. He had two brothers and a sister Pelagia. The name of one brother was Paul. The name of the other older brother is unknown, but there is an account, that he was afterwards head of the Krasnogorsk Zolotonoshsk monastery.

The childhood years of Stefan were spent in the settlement of Berezan' in the Pereyaslavli' district of the Poltava governance, where the family settled after the father's discharge from service. When he came of age, Stefan entered the Kiev Theological Academy, where at the time studied two other future sainted-hierarchs -- Joasaph, fu-

ture bishop of Belgorod (Comm. 4 September and 10 December), and Paul, future metropolitan of Tobol'sk.

Having received a religious education, Stefan entered the Krasnogorsk Transfiguration monastery (afterwards changed to Pokrov / Protection monastery, and in 1789 transformed into a women's monastery), where his elder brother already pursued ascetic life. On 23 April 1730 he took monastic vows with the name of Sophronii, -- honour of Saint Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem (Comm. 11 March).

On the night after his taking of monastic vows, the monk Sophronii heard a Voice in the Pokrov church: "When thou shalt become bishop, raise up a church in the name of All Saints", -- predicting of his future service. After two years, in 1732, they summoned him to Kiev, in the Sophia cathedral of which they ordained him to the dignity of monkdeacon, and then to priestmonk. Concerning the following period of the life of Saint Sophronii, it says the following in his service-form: "After having taken vows he was treasurer at that Zolotonoshsk monastery for two years, and then he was taken by decree of His Grace Arsenii Berlov of the Pereyaslavl' diocese into the house of his archbishop, in which he was steward for 8 years subject to the Alexander Nevsky monastery, from which during the course of those years he was sent to Saint-Peterburg on hierarchical business, for which in advocacy he spent two years".

These facts testify readily enough to the connections of the saint with his original Pokrovsk monastery. During his obedience under the presiding hierarch at Pereyaslavl', he often visited at his monastery, spending the day in quiet contemplation and work, giving example in the making of a monastic brother.

During the time of priestmonk Sophronii's sojourn on hierarchical business to the Synod, they showed particular attention to him. And when it became necessary to increase the brethren at the Alexander Nevsky monastery in Saint Peterburg, -- 29 monks then in number having been summoned from various monasteries in Russia, in January 1742 was summoned also the future saint. A year later they appointed him treasurer of the monastery, and in 1746 he was appointed to the office of head of the monastery, which he fulfilled for seven years more.

For helping him he summoned his fellow countryman, a native of the city of Priluk, -- the priestmonk Synesii, and made him the organiser of the Novo-Sergiev monastery, which was associated with the Alexander Nevsky monastery. From this period of time the friendship of the two ascetics, -- priestmonk Sophronii and priestmonk Synesii -- was strengthened into a single pastoral effort, and they were inseparable until their end in the Siberian land. During these years Saint Sophronii laboured much at the managing of the monastery and improvement of teaching at the seminary located near it. Together with Archbishop Theodosii he concerned himself with the needs of adding to the monastic library.

A two-level church was built by him: the top -- in the name of Saint Theodore Yaroslavich, older brother of

Saint Alexander Nevsky; and the lower -- in the name of Saint John Chrysostom.

In 1747 the bishop of Irkutsk, Innokentii II (Nerunovich) died. For six years afterwards the territory of the Irkutsk diocese remained without a spiritual head.

Finally, the empress Elizaveta Petrovichna (1741-1761) by decree on 23 February 1753 recommended to the Holy Synod the pious head of the Alexander Nevsky monastery Sophronii, as "a person, not only worthy of bishop's dignity, but also quite entirely able to fulfill the wishes and the hopes of the state and the Synod -- to take up the burden of episcopal service on the far frontier and satisfy the needs of his flock in that harsh land, amidst wild primitives and lawless people".

On 18 April 1753, Thomas Sunday, priestmonk Sophronii was ordained bishop of Irkutsk and Nerchinsk in the Great Uspensky cathedral.

Foreseeing difficult service on the distant Siberian frontier, the newly-established bishop did not immediately set off to the Irkutsk eparchy, but rather began to gather up educated and spiritually experienced co-workers. During this period Saint Sophronii visited at his original Krasnogorsk monastery. Also at the holy places of Kiev, he sought the blessings of the Kievo-Perchersk Saints for his service. The constant companion of the saint, just as before, was the priestmonk Synesii, ardently sharing in the life's work of his friend.

At Moscow, the Archbishop of Moscow and Sevska Platon, -- who participated in the ordination of then priestmonk Sophronii, provided him further assistance. He taught him fatherly precepts for his impending task, since he was quite familiar with the peculiarities of the Siberian religious manner of life, he forewarned him about the self-willed local authorities, and advised him to gather together trustworthy helpers.

On 20 March 1754 the saint arrived at Irkutsk. He went at first to the Ascension monastery -- the place of residence of his predecessor, and prayed at the grave of bishop Innokentii (Kul'chitz), imploring his blessing on his impending task.

Having familiarised himself with the state of affairs in the diocese, the saint set about the re-organisation of the Spiritual consistory, monasteries and parishes, and turned to the Holy Synod with an appeal to dispatch worthy people for priestly service to the Irkutsk eparchy.

Before the arrival of Sainted Sophronii, the Irkutsk monasteries had already a century-old history. The founders of these monasteries were motivated by a fervent desire for ascetic monastic life. The sagacious sainted-bishop appointed as heads of the monastic communities people of piety, wisdom, virtue, and with great experience both of life and things spiritual. In 1754 His Grace Sophronii raised up his friend and companion priestmonk Synesii to be archimandrite of Ascension monastery. This memorable monastic head served the monastery for thirty-three years until his blessed end. In September 1754 the sainted-bishop issued an ukaz (decree), in which concern was noted for the education and upbringing of the children

of clergy. By his ukaz to the clergy he considered as a duty the education of their children in the Chasoslov, the Psalter, singing and letters, and this instruction "ought to happen with all industriousness and extremest diligence, so that the children might be able to accomplish the responsibilities of sacristan and deacon according to their due ability".

Studying closely both people and circumstances, the sainted-bishop in his sermons and conversations incessantly exhorted all to an higher moral ideal. He devoted particular attention to the reverent and correct doing of Divine-services and priestly Sacraments, and he also watched after the moral purity of laymen; he was concerned about the position of women in the family, and defended them against their unjust inequality. The sainted-bishop attempted everywhere to set straight the *ustav* (rule) of Divine-services, for which purpose he summoned to himself priests, deacons, sub-deacons and sacristans, who during the time of hierarchical Divine-services participated in the choir or sub-deacons.

Journeying about the diocese, the saint noted that not everywhere was the proper attention given to the ringing of bells and incensing, and therefore by means of ukaz he restored the proper censuring and ringing of bells.

Called to apostolic service in this frontier region, Sainted Sophronii realised, that in addition to the enlightening of believing Christians, it availed him to bring to the faith idol-worshippers, who were very numerous in Siberia.

To bring pagans to the Church of Christ was difficult, especially since from time to time there was no one to serve in churches, and to borrow for missionary activity made matters all the worse. Knowing how that the hierarchical Divine-services would have a salutary effect on non-Russians, the saint not only himself served with reverence, but also required it of all his clergy.

Sainted Sophronii concerned himself over the manner of life of the lesser nations and he contributed to the development of a stable culture among the local people. He offered them monastic lands for settlements and in every way he endeavoured to isolate them from the influence of paganism. A throng of visitors constantly arrived and came from faraway places for a blessing.

But amidst his many cares, he did not forget about his inner spiritual life and eternity -- he also led an ascetic life. There is preserved an account about this from the cell-attendant of Sainted Sophronii, which relates, that the saint "used food simple and in small quantity, he served quite often, spent the greater part of the night at prayer, slept on the floor under a sheepskin or if fur -- a deerskin or bear hide, and a small simple pillow -- this was all his bedding for a sleep of short duration".

The spirit of his ascetic life fit in with the general uplift of the Christian spirit in Russia following the glorification of Sainted Dimitrii of Rostov (Comm. 21 September), Theodosii of Chernigov (Comm. 9 September), and in particular the uncovering of the undecayed relics of his predecessor -- Sainted Innokentii of Irkutsk (Comm. 9 February). This event inspired Sainted Sophronii with greater strength and encouraged his hope for the help of Sainted Innokentii in his task of building up the diocese.

Until the end of his days Sainted Sophronii kept his love for the Krasnogorsk Zolotonoshsk monastery, which had nurtured him in the days of his youth. He constantly contributed support for its upkeep, sending off the necessary means for this.

Having sensed a deterioration in his health, Sainted Sophronii made a petition to the Synod to discharge him for rest. But they tarried with an answer from Peterburg, since it was difficult to immediately choose a worthy successor.

The final days in the life of Sainted Sophronii were spent in prayerful asceticism.

The light, which shone on the good deeds of Sainted Sophronii, continues to the present to testify to the glory of the Heavenly Father, "mercifully having strengthened His saints". And now not only in Siberia at the place of his final deeds, but also at the place of his first deeds, there is reverently preserved the holy memory of Sainted Sophronii.

A second commemoration of Sainted Sophronii is made on 30 June (glorification, 1918).



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MARCH 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb 28 (Feb 15) Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	1 (Feb 16)	2 (Feb 17)	3 (Feb 18)	4 (Feb 19)	5 (Feb 20)	6 (Feb 21)
			Fast		Fast	5:30 All-Night Vigil
7 (Feb 22) Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meatfare). Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	8 (Feb 23)	9 (Feb 24)	10 (Feb 25)	11 (Feb 26)	12 (Feb 27)	13 (Feb 28)
	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil	Fast: dairy, fish, wine, & oil 5:30 All-Night Vigil
14 (Mar 1) The Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare). Tone 7 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	15 (Mar 2)	16 (Mar 3)	17 (Mar 4)	18 (Mar 5)	19 (Mar 6)	20 (Mar 7)
	6:30 Compline w/Great Canon Fast	6:30 Compline w/Great Canon Fast	6:30 Compline w/Great Canon Fast	6:30 Compline w/Great Canon Fast	Fast	5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
21 (Mar 8) Triumph of Orthodoxy. Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	22 (Mar 9) 40 Martyrs of Sebaste	23 (Mar 10)	24 (Mar 11)	25 (Mar 12)	26 (Mar 13)	27 (Mar 14)
Fast: wine & oil	Fast: wine & oil	Fast	Fast 5:30 Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	Fast	Fast	4:30 General Pannyhida 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
28 (Mar 15) St. Gregory Palamas. Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	29 (Mar 16)	30 (Mar 17)	31 (Mar 18)	Apr 1 (Mar 19)	Apr 2 (Mar 20)	Apr 3 (Mar 21)
Fast: wine & oil	Fast	Fast	Fast 5:30 Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	Fast	Fast	5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil



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APRIL 2021						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mar 28 (Mar 15) St. Gregory Palamas. Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	Mar 29 (Mar 16)	Mar 30 (Mar 17)	Mar 31 (Mar 18) 5:30 Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts Fast	1 (Mar 19)	2 (Mar 20)	3 (Mar 21) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
4 (Mar 22) Adoration of Cross. Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	5 (Mar 23)	6 (Mar 24) 5:30 Vigil of the Annunciation Fast: wine & oil	7 (Mar 25) ANNUNCIATION 9:30 Vesperal Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	8 (Mar 26)	9 (Mar 27)	10 (Mar 28) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
11 (Mar 29) St. John of the Ladder, Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	12 (Mar 30)	13 (Mar 31) Fast: wine & oil	14 (Apr 1) 5:30 Matins w/Great Canon Fast	15 (Apr 2)	16 (Apr 3) 5:30 Matins w/Akathist Fast	17 (Apr 4) 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
18 (Apr 5) St. Mary of Egypt. Tone 4 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	19 (Apr 6)	20 (Apr 7)	21 (Apr 8)	22 (Apr 9)	23 (Apr 10) 5:30 Vigil of Lazarus Fast	24 (Apr 11) 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy 12 Noon Church Cleaning Day 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
25 (Apr 12) PALM SUNDAY 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	26 (Apr 13) Great & Holy Monday 6:30 Bridegroom Matins Fast	27 (Apr 14) Great & Holy Tuesday 6:30 Bridegroom Matins Fast	28 (Apr 15) Great & Holy Wednesday 6:30 Matins of the Lord's Supper Fast	29 (Apr 16) Great & Holy Thursday 9:30 Vesperal Divine Liturgy "Lord's Supper" 6:30 Matins w/the 12 Gospels Fast: wine & oil	30 (Apr 17) Great & Holy Friday 10:00 Royal Hours 4:30 Vespers w/Taking Down from the Cross 6:30 Matins w/the Lamentations Fast	May 1 (Apr 18) Great & Holy Saturday 9:00 Vesperal Divine Liturgy 10:30 Midnight Office 11:00 Procession & Matins 12:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil