



YOUR DIOCESE

Alive in Christ

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SUMMER 2010



Memorial Day Pilgrimage to St. Tikhon's Monastery, 2010

Alive in Christ is produced by the Department of Communications of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, a diocese of the Orthodox Church in America.

Editor

His Grace, Bishop TIKHON

Managing Editor

Cindy Davis

Editorial Staff

Matushka Sandra Kopestonsky

Graphic Design

Kimberly Metz

Cover Photograph

Cindy Davis

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Please submit articles and photographs (with captions) to Cindy Davis at communications@doepa.org.

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MOVING MOUNTAINS WITH *Faith*

The Lord said: Verily I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you (Matthew 17:20).

As I pen these words, I am hiking in the French Alps, gazing at the highest mountain peaks in Europe. The words of the Lord concerning faith acquire a visual reality in this context and are a reminder of how strong our faith needs to be, if it is to be measured against the solidity and mass of such gigantic mountains. Even if the Lord was speaking metaphorically, the physical image of mountains helps us to understand the depth and sincerity our faith is called to attain. In life, each of us faces many mountains: our own passions, temptations, addictions and struggles. In our diocese we also face a mountain of obstacles: a society at worst hostile to, and at best vaguely interested in, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a decline in the membership of our parishes, an aging population and financial hardship for both our communities and our families. On many levels, we are facing the obstacle of death and the central question confronting us is: what are we going to do about this great mountain which looms before us?

We have two choices: We can look upon the coming death of our parishes with the eyes of the world: as something which brings only annihilation and nothingness. If we choose this way, we can simply accept this death without question and either avoid it or become resigned to it, both of which are the path of least resistance (laziness). The other way to approach death is to look upon it as the reality which brings us closer to the next world, to the Kingdom. If we choose this way, the mountain of death should motivate us to action, precisely since we are called to share and proclaim the message of the overcoming of death by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One contemporary elder writes: "Our death is our birth into eternal life. Our efforts in learning how to pray, how to humble ourselves, how to have confidence, not in ourselves, but in the living God, have but one aim: namely, to train us for the great day of our death. And in which God do we put our trust? *In God which raiseth the dead* (2 Corinthians 1:9)."

How can we begin? The Apostle Paul writes: *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I can remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing* (I Corinthians 13:2). The mountains facing us may seem insurmountable, and our faith not equal to the task. But our Lord asks our faith to be as the mustard seed, and Saint Paul reminds us that we can begin with the virtues, above all the virtue of love for our neighbor. These are spiritual principles that should apply to our work in our diocesan parishes. If all of our efforts to "keep our parishes running" are only directed to do so "until we have no more parishioners," then we will only be left with the nothingness of the world. But if all of our efforts are directed to keeping our parishes running so that they might declare the glory of the Kingdom and become havens of sanctification and healing, then we might actually accomplish something, and, by God's grace, bring a spark of life back into what is dying.

The moving of mountains requires only one thing: a willingness on our part to make a small offering to the Lord. This offering can take the form of a simple prayer, a kind word, a humble thought, a charitable act or a welcoming embrace. These are the first steps that will help us, if not to move mountains, then at least to attain their summit with patience and labor. Let us begin this work, knowing that this life is our only opportunity to struggle to prepare ourselves for the great and holy moment of our encounter with God – the day of our true birth into the Heavenly Kingdom which cannot be moved (cf. Heb. 12:28).



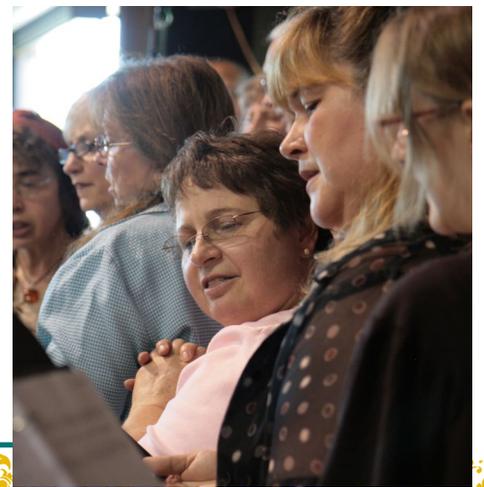
The 106th Annual Pilgrimage to the MONASTERY OF ST. TIKHON OF ZADONSK

South Canaan, Pennsylvania



Every year, pilgrims from throughout the diocese and beyond travel to the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. The faithful have been making this journey to the center of Orthodox Christianity in America for over a century. On this 106th annual pilgrimage, clergy and faithful from the diocese volunteered their time to serve food and drinks to the hundreds of other pilgrims. The weekend opened with the Blessing of the well on Friday evening. Saturday, the Leavetaking of Pentecost, was marked by a large presence at the Divine Liturgy. On Sunday, the Monastery was blessed to receive the Myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God of Iveron, visiting from Hawaii. On Memorial Day, 12 Hierarchs, including His Beatitude, Metropolitan JONAH, concelebrated the Divine Liturgy at the pavilion church. More photos can be viewed at www.doepa.org/





Inaugural Webcast Lecture Series

This summer, the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania initiated lecture series which were broadcast on the internet. The aim of this new endeavor was to provide education and spiritual nourishment to the faithful throughout the diocese. The lectures were given by His Grace, Bishop Tikhon. A small group of people were physically present for each lecture (St. Tikhon's Monastery and Holy Apostles Mission).

For the first series, His Grace discussed in depth the Book of Jonah. The first lecture provided a brief overview of the book and presented some basic Orthodox Christian principles for the interpretation of Holy Scripture. The second lecture took a close look at the second chapter, the Prophet Jonah's sojourn in the belly of the whale where he recites a beautiful Psalm-like prayer of repentance. The last two lectures addressed the remaining chapters of the book.



The next series will be starting up again in August. The first of a two part lecture will broadcast on Wednesday, August 4th, at 7:30pm. His Grace will focus on the Book of Job. The second part will occur on the following Wednesday, August 11th. A lecture on the Prophet Elijah will also be given on Wednesday, August 25th. Exact locations for the lectures will be determined and announced on the diocesan website, <http://www.doepa.org>. The live webcasts can be watched at <http://www.doepa.org/livevideo.html> and the recorded ones at http://www.doepa.org/multimedia_lectures.html

Clergy Wives Luncheon



On Saturday, June 26, a luncheon was held at the diocesan center for the clergy wives of the diocese. This was an opportunity for the women to share their experiences, create a supportive network, and to express concerns that face the lives of clergy families.

My conversion experience to Orthodoxy began 32 years ago on a bus ride taken to watch my son play in a soccer game. My seatmate was Orthodox and I barely knew what that meant. Our friendship grew and she invited me to the Pascha service in her Ukrainian Church. I didn't understand a word. I longed for the Gospel, which meant sermon, which meant I could sit down, as my feet, ensconced in new shoes, were killing me. Several years later, and having spent 4 years as an Episcopal missionary in the Dominican Republic (DR), I was asked to attend seminary for further training.

Down the street from my apartment was an Orthodox Church and one Saturday I wandered down to Vespers. At least this was in English. Following the service, Sam, (I later learned his name), invited me to go forward and kiss the cross held by the priest. Life has never been the same. When I kissed that cross, I felt as if a bolt of fire passed from my lips to my toes. After that, I was totally drawn to this place where God had acted in such a mighty way. I spent my second year in seminary preparing to return to the mission field, while attending Orthodox services and eventually singing in the choir. Everyone expected me to convert but returning to the Dominican Republic was my priority. Sometimes I wonder, "What if?" On the other hand, I am very thankful for the 16 God-bonding years that I was given while living and serving there.

Fast forward to early 2009. I am retired but still living and volunteering in the DR. Since my retirement I have often prayed, "Lead me Lord!" Sitting in my apartment in Azua one day surfing the internet, a yearning to attend an Orthodox service hit me. Where? Certainly not down here! Googling 'Orthodox Churches' in my stateside home town, St. Michael the Archangel [OCA--Wilmington, Delaware] popped up. I went to the home page, brought up a picture of the iconostasis and was surprised when tears started to fill my eyes. "This will not do," I said to myself and clicked it off and went on with life. However, upon returning to the states in May, I attended Vespers my first Saturday. Ah!

I still remembered the music. Afterwards a member invited me to join them for a Sunday service and I replied that I would try but my time was limited. Odd how sometimes we do things that God wants us to do without Him really letting us know what He wants. I looked at my calendar and decided that my second Sunday would be a good time to work in a visit, and, as an old hymn goes, "Sometimes a light surprises the Christian when he sings." I was truly surprised. During the service, a sense of intense peace and joy enveloped me and words formed in my thoughts, "You have come home." What was that supposed to mean? I thought my home was in the DR.

Nine months later, nine months of prayers ascending, arguing with God (He always wins), conversations and emails with Father Andrew Anderson (can't I be Orthodox in the USA and Episcopal in the DR? and I only came here for one service), reading books and blogs, questioning ideas and hearing in response "I want your heart!", and, heeding that voice, packing up some stuff and giving away the rest, and finally, leaving my beloved DR in search of home.

Lazarus Saturday, at the age of 72, I was welcomed home into the congregation of St. Michael the Archangel, in Wilmington, DE. Home with God is a great place to be wherever one is.

Hindsight, aided by my life confession, has afforded me the luxury of looking back and seeing God's hand upon my life. Among many memories is the moment, and I never marked the date, when I said to God in desperation, "Here is my life. So far I seemed to have made a mess of it so I don't have much to offer but broken pieces. Here they are." Since then He has healed my hurts and wounds, fulfilled my high school ambition to be a missionary by sending me out as His emissary and sustained me the entire time. Now He has called me back to the states and into the Orthodox Church. This past year has been a wild ride. Always expect surprises when God is in charge of your life. Glory to God for all things!

Coming
Home
Caroline Humphrey

OCEC Church School Educator's Workshop

On Saturday, June 5, the first of three deanery OCEC Teacher Trainings took place at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre, with pastor, Very Rev. Joseph Martin, Matushka Gloria, and Office member, Marina Martin, serving as hosts. Sponsored by His Grace, Bishop Tikhon and the Office of Church School and Curriculum of the Diocese of Eastern PA, this all-day workshop, entitled, *Educating Ourselves and Our Children in Godliness*, was presented through the Teacher Training Dept. of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission. OCEC Teacher Training Dept. Chair, Mat. Myra Kovalak, accompanied by fellow trainers, Father Daniel Kovalak (Dean of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery), Khouria Anna Hughes, and Office of Church School and Curriculum Chair, Maria Proch, headed a two-track series of three sessions, Teacher Training I, and Church School Director.

The Teacher Training I track consisted of three two-hour sessions: Overview of Orthodoxy, Introduction to Teaching, and Curriculum and Resources. The Church School Director (CSD) track included: Introduction to Church School Ministry, Curriculum and Resources for the CSD, and Building Your Staff, Building Your Students. The sessions in this workshop are dedicated to enhancing the quality of education in our parish schools by providing Orthodox church school directors and teachers



with knowledge of the faith, management skills, and basic instructional techniques. A certificate of participation was given to those who completed the courses in their area. Both new and experienced teachers and directors found the courses, taught by professional educators, both valuable and enjoyable. Moreover, the fellowship and interaction among participants created a long-lasting network of friendship and support.

His Grace, Bishop Tikhon presided over the luncheon, taking questions and ideas for discussion, and offering his thoughts on the importance of educating all ages, preschool through adults. His Grace also expressed his hope that further trainings will continue in the coming years, offering further studies and spreading interest and enthusiasm to all diocesan parishes.

Some of the highlights of the Teacher Training I sessions were Father Daniel's Overview of Orthodoxy and his idea and explanation of the manner in which one could explain the sacrament of confession to children. Another



highlight was creating an age appropriate Pentecost lesson. In Introduction to Teaching, participants liked the sharing of lesson ideas. An idea to create a diocesan live chat to be available online, enabling church school teachers to share ideas and question and issues was presented.

Discussed during the Curriculum and Resources session were the several national available discussion sites through Facebook by the Greek Archdiocese Dept. of Religious Education, the Antiochian Archdiocese Website of the Dept of Christian Education, as well as the Orthodox Christian Educator's Forum of OCEC, and the Q and A section of the Orthodox Church in America Dept. of Christian Education website. The CSD sessions were a springboard for discussion of ideas and issues of implementing and managing a parish church school program, from scheduling to staff and pupil management, as well as parent involvement and curriculum conducive to parish educational needs. The afternoon sessions included: displays of current curriculum and support materials, children's books, Orthodox education websites, online curricula, supplemental studies and resources, and questions and answers. The presentation of certificates concluded the day's events.

Several comments were posted following the day's activities:

"Thanks for the wonderful day. I was enlightened and inspired." -Matuskha Mary Solak, Holy Trinity Church, East Stroudsburg, PA

"Thank you again for all of your hard work in putting together the Teacher Training in Wilkes-Barre. I am very glad I attended. It was encouraging, energizing, and I learned a lot. I look forward to when you have future training sessions." -Trudy Ellmore, Holy Trinity Church, Catasauqua, PA.

There will be two more Teacher Training Workshops presented in the fall (see Upcoming Events on p. 16). Those interested in attending may contact Mat. Myra at mekovalak@gmail.com.



The highlight of this year's pilgrimage was the children's activity booth staffed by the OCA Department of Christian Education [DCE]. Seventy-three children participated in activities that included a tour of the monastery museum, presentations on North American Orthodox Church history, and stories relating the lives of North America's Orthodox saints. Resources recently produced by the DCE were featured. Children enjoyed making sand crosses, prayer bracelets, and the always popular and often requested bird feeders. Maria Proch directed the activities, assisted by her mother, Marie Proch; DCE members Valerie Zahirsky, Alexandra Safchuk, John Pusey, and Daria Petrykowski; and Anastasia Bilas. The children were delighted to have Bishop Melchisedek join them. Thank you to Fr. John Perich for preparing the museum for the Children's Activities.



Ariel Kravetsky, 2010 Graduate of Hancock NY Central High School, receives a Scholarship from St Michael's Scholarship Committee. She will attend Penn State Hazleton Campus. In photo from left: Joseph Krenitsky, parish president, Ariel Kravetsky, Archpriest John Kowalczyk and Protodeacon Gabriel Petorak. Deanna Cleary, graduate of Valley View H.S. also received a scholarship (not pictured).

2010 GRADUATES



Deanna Cleary
Valley View H.S.
St. Michael Church
Jermyn, PA



Will T. Cohen, Ph.D.
Catholic University of America
All Saints Church
Olyphant, PA



Gregory Dennis Danko
Pen Argyl H.S.
St. Nicholas Church
Bethlehem, PA



Thomas Leopold Gower
Bangor H. S.
Holy Trinity Church
Stroudsburg, PA



Anastasia Nadine Hanney
Rowan University
St. Nicholas Church
Philadelphia, PA



Richard V. Hutton, Jr.
Penn State University
SS. Peter and Paul Church
Minersville, PA



Helen Kaucher
Holy Redeemer H.S.
St. John the Baptist Church
Edwardsville, PA



Deanna Kravetsky
Hancock Central
St. Michael Church
Jermyn, PA



Larissa S. Mariani
Conwell-Egan HS
St. Stephen Cathedral
Philadelphia, PA



Patricia Ann Metz
Cabryni College
St. Nicholas Church
Bethlehem, PA



Kara McMyne
Ithaca College
St. Basil Church
Simpson, PA



Kristin Marie Mihaly
West Chester University
Holy Annunciation
Berwick, PA



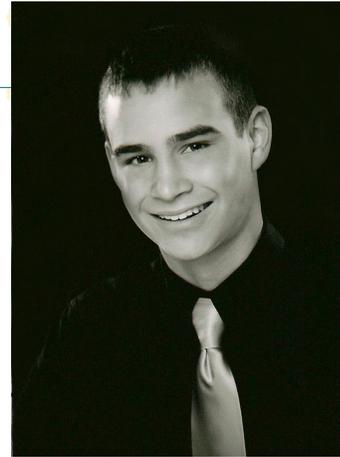
Andrew J. Mihaly
Berwick H.S.
Holy Annunciation
Berwick, PA



Melissa O'Brien
Brandywine Heights H.S.
Holy Trinity Church
Catasauqua, PA



Lori Pawelski
Misericordia University
All Saints Church
Olyphant, PA



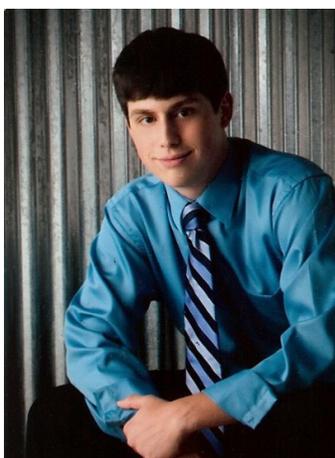
Stephen Pianovich
Upper Dauphin HS
Holy Ascension Church
Lykens, PA



Christina M. Proch
Unionville H.S.
St. Basil Church
Simpson, PA



Kristin E. Roberts
University of Delaware
St. Michael Church
Wilmington, DE



Nicholas S. Roberts
Catasauqua H.S.
St. Nicholas Church
Bethlehem, PA



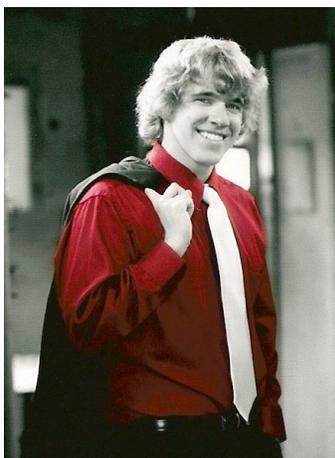
Michael Skasko
Carbondale Area H.S.
St. Basil Church
Simpson, PA



Jason Stankiewicz
University of Scranton
Holy Trinity Church
Wilkes-Barre, PA



Ellen Stinger
Stroudsburg H.S.
Holy Trinity Church
Stroudsburg, PA



Andrew J Sultzbaugh
Upper Dauphin Area H.S.
Holy Ascension Church
Lykens, PA



Joshua Scoochin
University of Scranton
All Saints Church
Olyphant, PA



Katrina Toporcer
Greater Nanticoke Area H.S.
St. John the Baptist
Edwardsville, PA



Stephen Verespy
Keystone College
All Saints Church
Olyphant, PA



Joshua John Yarosh
TST BOCES
St. Vladimir Church
Lopez, PA



Brittany Rose Yarosh
Ithaca High School
St. Vladimir Church
Lopez, PA



At the beginning, grace instructs us, prompting us to think, feel and act in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel commandments. Everything is easy. The Holy Spirit, ever with us, gives us a kindly disposition towards other people. This is like a normal, natural attitude for us. But it does not last. One day, grace in this palpable form leaves us.

A second, difficult, period begins. The question arises: 'How to live without grace?' One must continue to live as if the Holy Spirit were with us, and try to remain in the same form of life in which, by grace, we have acquired certain attitudes towards our brothers and sisters. One must be violent with oneself.

It is the same thing with prayer. In the beginning, prayer is like a natural state. One prays easily: prayer wells up from the heart. When the Holy Spirit abandons us, we must force ourselves to pray as before, when we had grace: with all our being, all our heart, and even with all our body.

Archimandrite Sophrony

A Visit to Holy Protection Monastery

Alfred Siewers

Father Dan Kovalak led a group of about 25 parishioners from Holy Cross Church in Williamsport on a pilgrimage to Holy Protection Greek Orthodox Women's Monastery in White Haven on Saturday, May 15. We were very hospitably received by Gerondissa Olympiada and the sisters, as well as by the monastery's chaplain Fr Mark Andrews, who is a graduate of St. Tikhon's Seminary.

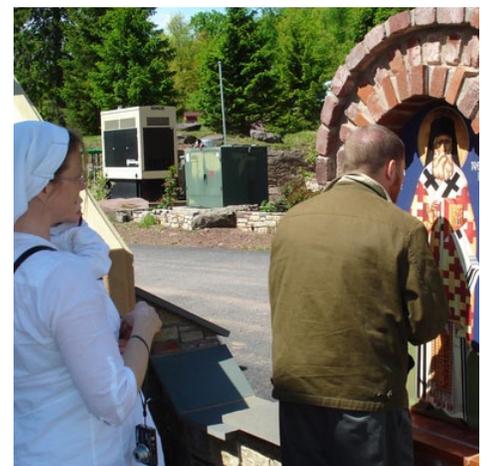
The group spent most of the day at the monastery, attending liturgy at its church dedicated to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and then exploring the other chapels on its spacious grounds. The monastery is located on a wooded mountain overlooking Interstate 80 and the Lehigh River Valley at the White

Haven exit, where its large lighted white cross is visible at night to westbound travelers on the transcontinental expressway from New York.

We found the monastery, sheltered high above the expressway among woods with a variety of wildlife and fresh streams, to be a peaceful and holy refuge. Construction of its current facilities began in 2001 on the site of the old White Haven sanitarium, which had already been torn down after being abandoned for a number of years. The sisters moved into the completed complex a few years ago from the farm in nearby Weatherly where they originally began their community. (The monastery, founded in 1993, was the first of 17 monasteries founded in

North America under the guidance of Elder Ephraim, former Abbot of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos, and its "Mother House" is the Archangel Michael Monastery on the island of Thassos in Greece.)

In recent years the sisters have worked hard to transform the mountaintop into a garden-like campus. It includes their own vegetable gardens, greenhouse, fruit orchards, and areas for chickens and goats. The grounds feature landscaped lawns and paths, and a guest house for visitors who have arranged to stay overnight, an icon studio, bakery, and woodworking and candle-making workshops. Gerondissa Olympiada is an iconographer and the sisters with help from other faithful have begun





the work of writing iconographic murals on the inside walls and ceilings of the main church. Towards the woods by the small cemetery we also visited the little wooden chapel dedicated to St. Seraphim of Sarov, which includes an icon with a relic from his clothing. The sister who gave us a tour of the chapels and grounds also shared with us the inspiring history of a miraculous icon of the Theotokos now at the monastery. The sisters then hosted the group for lunch.

Part of the group also visited All Saints Orthodox School, which while independent of the monastery, meets currently in a building on the farm where the monastery originally was housed. It is a Montessori elementary school focused on an Orthodox Christian approach to education. The group was impressed with its interactive classrooms and integration of Christianity into a curriculum ranging from math and science to social studies and writing.

We all felt blessed by the experience of visiting the monastery, and were grateful for the hospitality of the sisters and their warm pan-Orthodox welcome toward us as a visiting OCA parish. The visit helped us to see more deeply both the importance of monastic practice and tradition to Orthodox spiritual life, and the essential oneness of Orthodox spiritual life in North America and around the world, despite jurisdictional distinctions. Father Dan encouraged us to consider returning to the monastery as pilgrims for future “mini-retreats,” individually or in groups, and many of us plan to do so.

For more information on Holy Protection Monastery, please see <http://www.holyprotectionmonastery.org/en/mainpage.html>. For more information on All Saints Orthodox School, please call 570-427-2127.

Fr. Thomas Hopko's Maxims for Christian Living, 1 - 21

1. Be always with Christ and trust God in everything
2. Pray as you can, not as you want
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer done by discipline
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times each day
5. Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied
6. Make some prostrations when you pray
7. Eat good foods in moderation and fast on fasting days
8. Practice silence, inner and outer
9. Sit in silence 20 to 30 minutes each day
10. Do acts of mercy in secret
11. Go to liturgical services regularly
12. Go to confession and holy communion regularly
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings to a trusted person regularly
15. Read the scriptures regularly
16. Read good books, a little at a time
17. Cultivate communion with the saints
18. Be an ordinary person, one of the human race
19. Be polite with everyone
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby

Holy Cross, Williamsport



Alexander Federoff, son of Theodore and Carol Federoff was baptized into Christ on June 13, 2010.

St. Michael, Terymyn



Juiliانا Soroka, God daughter of Father John Kowalczyk, observed her 18th Birthday on July 27, 2010.

Holy Protection Orthodox Christian Preschool



On May 28, 2010, Holy Protection Preschool held its first annual Graduation Celebration. After the children performed a few of their favorite hymns and songs for parents, family members and friends, they were presented with their certificates. Jonathan Mohring was HPOCP's first official graduate. He will be leaving the school to move on to kindergarten and we all wish him the very best. The program was followed by a dinner, a visit from Pavlos, the puppet and a slide presentation of the year in review. For more information about HPOCP, visit the website at www.hpocp.com.

UPCOMING DIOCESAN EVENTS

Christ the Saviour, Harrisburg



Throughout this past school year, Grace Firestine, Evelyn Firestine, and Eden Tesfaziow have been preparing to participate in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. Our special thanks to Deb Hisiro for instructing the class this year, and to Willard Brown and the Men's Club for providing prayer books for each of the girls.

St. Basil, Simpson

Joseph Martin received the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation on Saturday, May 22. Tammy and George Shakleton were received into the Orthodox Church on Sunday, June 6. Their sponsors were Mary Okorn and Stephen Kowalsky. The adoption of Damian Kavalkovich was finalized on Sunday, April 18 at St. Basil's. Damian is the son of Ronald and Lorraine Kavalkovich.

Holy Trinity, McAdoo

On March 21, 2010, Melania Kurtz, daughter of Douglas and Jennifer Kurtz, was baptized and chrismated by the V. Rev. Claude Vinyard. Tatianna Sharonoff, daughter of sub deacon George and Kimberly Anna Sharonoff was baptized and chrismated on June 26, 2010,

August 4 & 11
Lecture Web-cast
His Grace, Bishop Tikhon
Book of Job

August 13
Clergy Retreat
St. Tikhon's Monastery

August 17
Diocesan Council Meeting
Diocesan Center, South Canaan

August 19
Alter Boy Outing
Olyphant

August 25
Lecture Web-cast
His Grace, Bishop Tikhon
Prophet Elijah

September 25
OCEC Teacher Training
Philadelphia Deanery
St. Stephen Cathedral

September 26
100th Anniversary
Ss. Peter and Paul Church
Minersville

October 9
OCEC Teacher Training
Frackville Deanery
Christ the Saviour Church
Harrisburg

November 19-20
Annual Diocesan Assembly
St. Nicholas Church
Bethlehem

Visit www.doepa.org for more information!