



YOUR DIOCESE

Alive in Christ

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA ♦ SUMMER 2011



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

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Editor

His Grace, Bishop TIKHON

Managing Editor

Cindy Davis

Editorial Staff

Matushka Sandra Kopestonsky

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

Is my parish alive in Christ?

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The magazine that you are reading proclaims on its cover the words: Your Diocese: Alive in Christ. This title is a reference to several passages in the Holy Scriptures, including the following one from the Holy Apostle Paul: *God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6).*

The words on the cover of this magazine are not simply a title, but a reminder that we are truly alive only through the love of God, which lifts us into the joy of the resurrection in spite of our enslavement to death, sin and corruption. At the same time, we are called to make our own effort to receive this great gift of life, which becomes apparent if we simply add a question mark to the title of this magazine: *Your Diocese: Alive in Christ?*

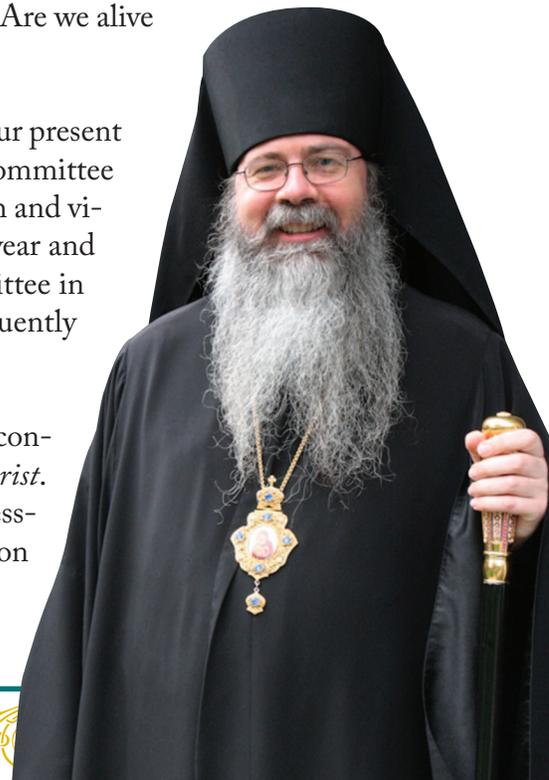
To truly understand what it means to be alive in Christ, we must begin by looking within and asking ourselves if we are doing everything possible to reflect the life of Christ. We must ask ourselves the question: “Am I alive in Christ?” It is this question which has inspired Christians to enter the path of repentance and to make the journey from death to life.

We are always aware of death because we see it all around us: in the loss of our loved ones, in the crippling effects of illnesses and in all the various ways in which sin, passion and corruption hold sway in this world. Even in our parishes, we tend to focus on death and decline: “Why are people leaving the area and leaving our parish?” “Why don’t our own parishioners come to worship with us on a regular basis?” “How can we afford to stay open for 5 more years?” “Who will pay for the new roof that we need?” “How can we afford a full-time priest with a declining membership?”

Such questions are legitimate, but they will bear no fruit unless they serve to bring us to the larger and more positive question: *are we alive in Christ?* To focus on death paralyzes us, but to undertake the work to find life brings us closer to Christ and therefore closer to even more abundant life. This is truly in our own personal spiritual struggle and it is true on the parish level as well. If we simply moan and complain about the state of our parishes, we will get nowhere. But if we offer a positive and healthy response to the question: Are we alive in Christ?, then we will be on our way towards life and resurrection.

Our last Diocesan Assembly presented such a positive and healthy response to our present situation by adopting a resolution to form a Revitalization Committee. This Committee has been charged with finding solutions to assist our parishes to regain the health and vitality they once had. The Revitalization Committee was formed in June of this year and has been meeting on a regular basis. You can read about the work of this committee in the pages of this magazine and, more importantly, participate in its work by frequently visiting the special Revitalization section on our website (doepa.org).

True revitalization will only take place if we work together and come up with concrete solutions so that, as St Paul says, *together we might be made alive with Christ.* Even a small effort in this direction will bring forth an abundance of spiritual blessings from God. And these blessings will be our confirmation that we are truly on our way to being fully alive in Christ.



Revitalization Committee

As was decided at the 2010 Diocesan Assembly, with the blessing of His Grace Bishop Tikhon, the first meeting of the newly formed Revitalization Committee of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania took place on Saturday, June 25th, 2011 at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Committee was formed with the purpose of revitalizing all parishes within the diocese, to foster spiritual growth and to better fulfill our Lord's commandment to preach the Gospel to all nations.

At its first meeting, the Committee discussed the various challenges facing our parishes and diocese today, which have resulted in a membership decline in many of our par-

ishes. The Committee explored, and will continue to explore, solutions to overcome these challenges. The committee has established this page on the diocesan website where it will post updates and resources as developments occur.

As with any good work, we begin with prayer and we ask for your prayers that God may bless our efforts and bring to fruition the revitalization of our diocese which seeks at all times to do His will. Reflecting upon St. Alexis' labors in this community, we ask you to pray with us:

A Prayer of intercession for Church revitalization

O holy Father Alexis, pillar of Orthodoxy and chosen vessel of the Truth of Christ, we come to you as one who received special

On Wednesday, May 18, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, visited the Holy Protection Preschool in Stroudsburg. The preschool is a collaboration of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church and Holy Trinity Orthodox Church which offers an Orthodox-based educational program designed for three, four and five year olds.



Fr. John Kowalczyk, Chancellor of the Diocese, was invited to speak at the Prison Fellowship International Convocation. Fr. John has been involved with prison ministry for many years and an active participant of the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM, www.ocpm-scoba.org).



grace from God. You put to shame the tyrants' deceits by your wisdom, and trampled demons underfoot by your righteous life. Entreat God that we also may be granted this same wisdom and love for virtue. By your intercession, illumine our darkened souls that we may receive the light of Truth and remain steadfast in the Faith. As you once proved foolish the wisdom of this world, so now incline our hearts to the fear of God that we may begin to learn true wisdom. As you once dispelled impiety with the example of your blameless life and refused to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, so now teach us to live piously and to walk in the way of the Lord. As you once returned to the bosom of the Orthodox Church and partook of the Fountain of life, so now help us to guide those gone astray and give drink to those in this land who are thirsting for the water of life. O holy confessor

Alexis, beseech the Lord that He look down with mercy on our Orthodox faithful and water with His grace the seed which you planted, that it may continue to flower and bring forth fruit a hundredfold. May we, having been counted worthy of blessings in this life, be vouchsafed the blessings of heaven; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

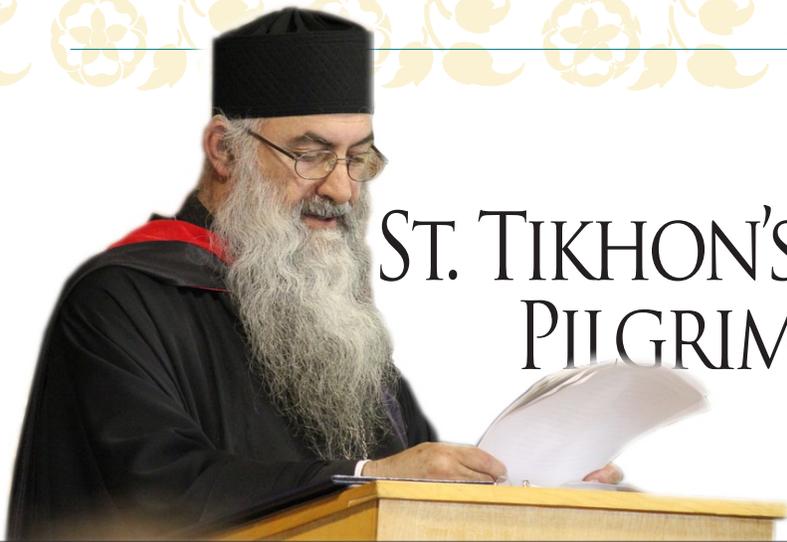
On Sunday, May 8, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, was invited to serve at St. Andrew's Church (Moscow Patriarchate) with His Eminence Archbishop Justinian. The Gospel was read in Slavonic, Romanian, and English. It was a joyous occasion with a procession and meal after the Divine Liturgy.



On June 17 and 18, St. John the Baptist Church in Edwardsville celebrated its centennial. To view more photos, go to www.doepa.org

In view of the natural disasters in Japan and the Southern states and thanks to generous offerings received at Lenten Deanery Services, the Wilkes-Barre Deanery, at their meeting on June 9, unanimously moved to disburse \$1,600 to IOCC for Japan relief and an additional donation of \$500 for Tornado relief in the South. The Deanery further contributed \$500 to OCMC to support Christina Semon of All Saints Church, Olyphant, in her current missionary assignment in Moldova. The Deanery expresses its appreciation to deanery faithful for making these contributions possible.





ST. TIKHON'S MONASTERY PIILGRIMAGE 2011



Thousands of Orthodox Christian faithful converged for the annual Memorial Day pilgrimage at the St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery, which has been a center of Orthodox Christianity in the United States since 1905.

The monastery was especially blessed this year to host the Myrrh-streaming icon of St. Anna which resides in the ROCOR Church, Joy of All Who Sorrow, in Philadelphia. Through God's Providence, many have been healed after venerating this icon and anointed with her myrrh.

The faithful were equally blessed to have for the entire Memorial Day weekend Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou) from St. John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, England. Fr. Zacharias was the spiritual child of Elder Sophrony for many years at the monastery. He delivered the commencement address at the seminary graduation ceremony which can be viewed at: <http://www.stspress.com/web-casts/>

A living icon, Fr. Zacharias' presence brought much grace and peace to the faithful visiting the monastery. His words offered to each of us were edifying and uplifting. As a humble example of a Christian struggling in this life, Fr. Zacharias always pointed to the way of the true person of Christ and encouraged the faithful to give thanks, not to despair in times of difficulty, and, at all times, to call upon the name of the Lord.





Those who succeed in simply keeping the faith [today] would be more greatly glorified in heaven than those Fathers who had worked miracles and even raised the dead to life.

Fr. Zacharias Zacharou

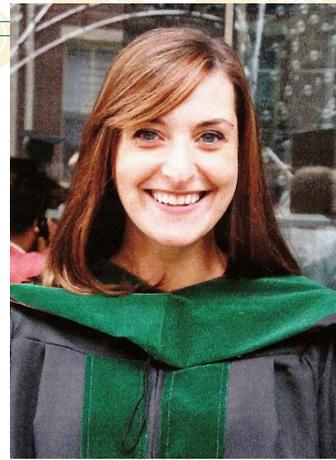
CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2011!



Rachel Baldin
Lakeland HS
St. Michael Church
Jermyn



Stephanie Bohlander
Widener University
St. Mark's Church
Wrightstown, PA



Jessica Bricker, D.O.
Philadelphia College of
Osteopathic Medicine
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



Joanna Carey
University of Delaware
St. Michael's
Wilmington, DE



June Chilcott
Wilkes University
Holy Trinity Church
Wilkes Barre



Alexander Cox
Temple University
St. Stephen's Cathedral
Philadelphia



Andre Cox
Upper Moreland HS
St. Stephen's Cathedral
Philadelphia



Nicholas Cox
Penn State University
St. Stephen's Cathedral
Philadelphia



Cindy Davis
Marywood University
St. Tikhon's Monastery
South Canaan



Tyler Ferenchick
Wyoming Valley West
St. John the Baptist
Edwardsville, PA



John Fedoronko
Penn State
St. Stephen Cathedral
Philadelphia



Laura Hadginske
Loyola University
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



Larissa Hatch
Juniata College
Holy Trinity Church
Stroudsburg



Monica Jekel
Covenant Christian Academy
Holy Apostles Mission
Mechanicsburg



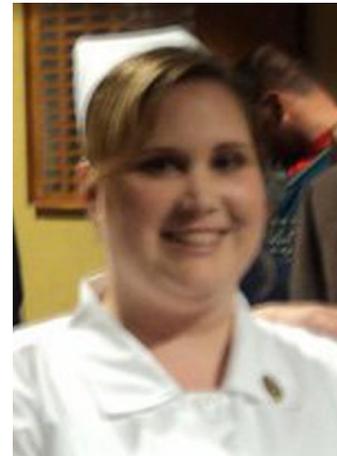
Kathryn Kellachow
21 Century Cyber Charter
Holy Apostles Mission
Mechanicsburg



Christine Kelly
Messiah College
Holy Apostles Mission
Mechanicsburg



Gabriela Kraiter
Charter School of Wilmington
St. Michael Church
Wilmington, DE



Carrie Kurtz
St. Luke's School of Nursing
Holy Trinity Church
McAdoo



Joseph Kurtz, Jr.
Mechanicsburg Area HS
Holy Apostles Mission
Mechanicsburg



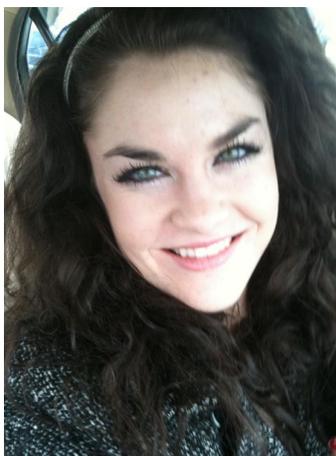
Marian Mosley
East Stroudsburg University
St. Michael's Church
Jermyn



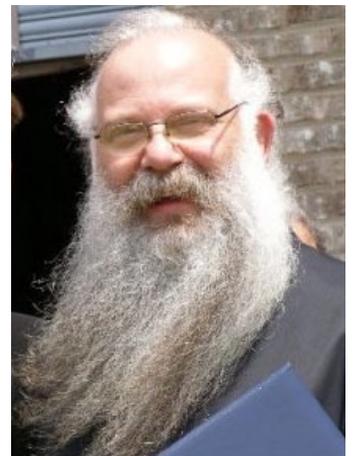
Nika S. Pcsolyar
Cornell University
St. Herman of Alaska
Gradyville



Daniel Pcsolyar
Marple Newton HS
St. Herman of Alaska
Gradyville



Molly A. Pylypciw
Palmyra Area HS
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



Seraphim Reynolds
St. Tikhon's Seminary Diaconal
Holy Apostles
Mechanicsburg



Krista Rebar
Midvalley High School
St. Nicholas Church
Olyphant



Melissa Riley
University of Delaware
St. Michael Church
Wilmington, DE



Mary Elizabeth Schlasta
Lakeland HS
St. Michael Church
Jermyn



Mariah Schware
Hershey HS
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



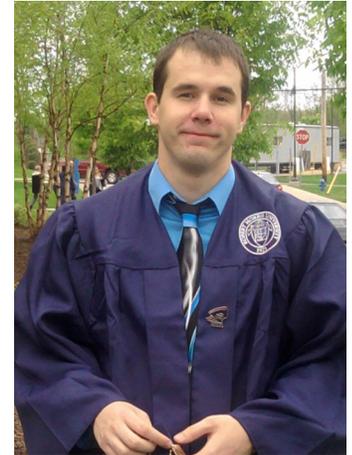
Joshua Scochin
University of Scranton
All Saints
Olyphant



Courtney E. Shatley
Mount Sophia Academy
St. Michael's Church
Wilmington, DE



Brittany Sarson
Midvalley High School
St. Nicholas Church
Olyphant



Nicholas Shewczyk
Robert Morris University
Holy Trinity Church
Wilkes Barre



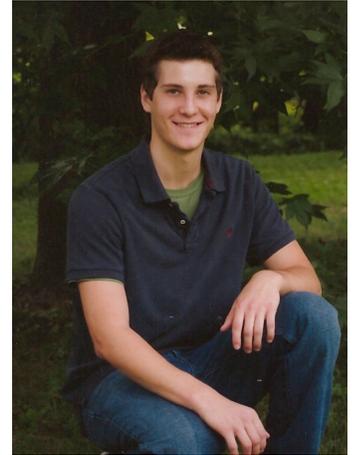
Jacob Sisko
North Penn HS



Megan C. Sisko
University of Pittsburgh



Harold A. Smith
University of Pittsburgh Law
St. Michael's Church
Mt. Carmel



Michael P. Somple
Elizabethtown HS
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



Christina Soucek
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St. Michael's Church
Old Forge



Julianna Soroka
Abington Heights
St. Michael Church
Jermyn



Laura Stinger
Stroudsburg HS
Holy Trinity Church
Stroudsburg



Piper A. Treece
George Washington U.
Christ the Saviour
Harrisburg



Kristin Twardzik
Lakeland
St. Michael Church
Jermyn



Julia Yeosock
James M. Coughlin HS
Holy Trinity Church
Wilkes Barre



Alexandra Von Barbier
Stroudsburg HS
Holy Trinity Church
Stroudsburg

"In our battle against the spirit of this world, we can use the best things the world has to offer in order to go beyond them; everything good in the world, if we are only wise enough to see it, points to God, and to Orthodoxy, and we have to make use of it."

Fr. Seraphim Rose, Orthodox Worldview

On August 22, 1876, an Irish-American reporter, Januarius MacGahan, a war correspondent of the London Daily News, came to Batak with Eugene Schuyler, the American consul general in Constantinople, to witness the carnage that had taken place at the hand of a bashibazouk army (unpaid Turkish mercenaries who lived off of the loot they acquired) led by Ahmet Aga Barun. The Turks had come to Batak in April of that year and got the people of Batak to lay down their arms in the belief they would be left to live their lives in peace. What happened that year was reported by MacGahan in many languages, and was even part of the moral ground for the Russo-Otto-

man war of 1877-78. Fr. Ivan, who I renamed “Otyetz Buistro” or “Fr. Fast” for his driving acumen. We were shown the incorrupt relics of St. John of Rila who fell asleep in the Lord in the year 946. On Sunday, at the invitation of His Eminence, Metropolitan Nikolay of Plovdiv, we traveled to Batak to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the first time since the days of the communists, in the church of St. Nedelya, where the Batak villagers took refuge during the days of the Turkish attack. The altar was the newly fashioned reliquary containing the bones of the Holy Martyrs of Batak. Behind this altar was the ossuary containing the other remains of the martyrs; we were literally standing on top of the martyrs as we prayed.

FEAST OF THE MARTYRS OF BATAK A Priest's Journey to Bulgaria + Fr. David Mahaffey



man war of 1877-78.

In April of this year, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church canonized the Martyrs of Batak, along with a group of martyrs of Novo Selo (a women's monastery where nuns and priests were martyred by the Turks). The Feast of the Martyrs of Batak was set for May 17, and invitations were sent to all the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches to join in the celebra-

tion of these newly glorified saints. I received word from a former parishioner who was in Bulgaria who wondered if I would be coming for the event. I contacted the OCA Chancellor, His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek to ask if I could attend on behalf of our church. I received the blessing of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, and so I traveled to Bulgaria on May 9.

While there, on Friday I was honored to serve Divine Liturgy in the parish where I had celebrated a baptism three years ago, Holy Trinity Church, in Plovdiv. On Saturday I traveled to St. John of Rila Monastery with Bishop Grigori of Poland and his deacon. We were driven there by

On Monday, the other bishops and clergy arrived and that evening we were taken by bus to Batak for the beginning of the Feast Day celebration. A procession was held through the streets of Batak (which has almost no pre-1876 buildings due to the Turkish destruction) led by the newly-created Icon of the Martyrs of Batak, preceded by young girls throwing flower petals the entire length of our trek, which turned out to be over five city blocks to the town square where a large platform had been erected for the services. Altogether over 22 bishops, about 20 priests, three deacons and thousands of the faithful made their way, a band playing, people singing, and stopping several times as we went. When we arrived at the square, we ascended the platform and began the Great Vespers. The choir from the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary of Plovdiv sang the responses, adding great beauty to the celebration. Following the service, the Metropolitan gave a sermon on the martyrs, which was followed by remarks and a presentation by the Bulgarian civil authorities and military corps. A huge fireworks display was also part of the evening festivities. Once concluded, we returned to our hotel, the St. Petersburg Park Hotel in Plovdiv, for a late dinner hosted by the owner of the hotel.

The following morning, something happened to our bus and a caravan of automobiles was hastily assembled to take us back to Batak for the Liturgy. I was placed in a car with His Eminences, Metropolitan Nataniel, and Metropolitan Grigori. Metropolitan Nataniel is a quiet and humble man, and Metropolitan Grigori is a lively man who speaks very good English, so I had quite an enjoy-



able conversation with him as we went.

We vested in the Church of the Holy Dormition and then again processed to the town square for the Liturgy. With the bishops of the various dioceses within Bulgaria were representatives from nearly every Orthodox country, as the website Dvery.bg reported, “Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Moscow, Serbia, Romania, Cyprus, Greek, Polish, Albanian and Czech and Slovak. A representative was sent and the Orthodox Church of America, whose autocephalous status is recognized by the MOJ (Moscow Patriarchate) and the BOC (Bulgarian Orthodox Church).” It was truly a sign of the Only Holy Catholic and Orthodox Church praying together in love and adoration of these Holy Martyrs. Following the Liturgy, we traveled to a restaurant that overlooked a beautiful man-made lake. I spoke with the Mayor of Batak and I told him that in 1876, God sent an American to report what had happened, and today God again sent an American to report what was happening now.

On Wednesday, we traveled to the city of Assenovgrad where a miracle working Icon of the Theotokos is kept in one of the churches there. It is considered the “daughter” of the miracle working icon of the Theotokos in the Bochkovo Monastery of the Dormition. The Bochkovo Icon came there in 1311 from Georgia and each year in May a procession is made from Assenovgrad to Bochkovo with the younger icon to “meet” the senior one in the mon-

astery. We served Divine Liturgy in Assenovgrad and then processed through the city to a waiting truck which took the icon to Bochkovo, a few kilometers away. As we went people thronged the Icon, trying to touch it and throw flowers upon the bier. Despite instructions to keep people to the outside of the procession, these devout believers would not



be denied access to their “Mother” and many of them got the better of me to reach their destination, many of them much my senior.

It never ceases to amaze me how a land considered so poor by worldly standards is so rich in its love of the Orthodox Faith. Everywhere

we went we were greeted by pious men and women who wanted nothing more than a simple blessing from a priest, a truly humbling experience. Metropolitan Nikolay is a gracious host who is making great improvements throughout his diocese and is greatly loved by his people; and rightly so, in every community you can see his hand in the new construction of religious buildings, or the restoration of ancient ones. He has made the seminary in Plovdiv a model for education in the country, second only to the schools and academy in Sophia. He holds the Holy Traditions of Orthodoxy in their proper place, never forsaking them for the temptations of modernity. But that does not mean he does not realize the importance of modern technology. He has his own website <http://www.plovdivskamitropolia.bg>, and local cable channel which he uses with great effectiveness. He has reopened and improved many monasteries, including some for women, and added quarters for visitors (the women’s monastery of Saints Cosmas and Damian near the village of Kuklen is a prime example of his work). All of this and more in an area where the average income is about 500 leva (\$365) per month, makes his work truly miraculous in nature. This has again shown me how true are words of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who said in the Gospel of St. Mark (9:23) “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth.” Metropolitan Nikolay is a true believer; it is an honor to know and serve with him.



PARISH & FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

The Holy Trinity Soup Kitchen Outreach hosted its second successful Soup Kitchen at the Stroudsburg United Methodist Church on Main Street on Sunday, June 19. The volunteer response from Holy Trinity parishioners, thus far, has been overwhelming for this mission. On this Sunday, 2011 Father's Day, twenty four faithful parishioners came out to help shop, cook, serve dinner and clean up afterwards for fifty-six hungry neighbors of the Stroudsburg area.

The Stroudsburg United Methodist Church has conducted this very organized Soup Kitchen for many years and various local organizations and churches take turns in cooking and serving a meal once or several times a month.

Fifty-six hungry neighbors were served a meal of Chili (less the jalapenos), macaroni and cheese, corn bread, Italian bread, fruit cocktail, salad, dessert, ice cream sandwiches, iced tea, lemonade, coffee, milk and juice. In addition to our adult parishioner volunteers, Holy Trinity teens, Zachary Lapp, Tyler Lapp, Casey Lapp and Alexa Gonzalez assisted in cooking and preparing the food. Our young adults, Larissa and Jacquie Hatch also contributed significantly in serving and cleaning. We at Holy Trinity are blessed to have so many culinary-savvy, caring and enthusiastic parishioners with the desire to participate in this outreach endeavor.

Since so many from our church have shown such great interest in this stewardship program, we will continue this mission to serve those in need at this Soup Kitchen on the second Friday of each month. We hope to make this a bi-monthly community service and eventually host the fourth Friday, as well as the second Friday of the month. We also have plans to construct a "Food Pantry" inside our church hall, where parishioners and friends can donate food items for the Soup Kitchen meals.

Holy Trinity, Stroudsburg



St. Mark's, Wrightstown



The way to God lies through love of other people and there is no other way. At the Last Judgment I shall not be asked if I was successful in my ascetic exercises or how many prostrations I made in the course of my prayers. I shall be asked, did I feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners: that is all I shall be asked." Mother Maria Skobtsova

Scouts at St. Mark's in Wrightstown recently completed the Chi-Rho Cub and Girl Scout religious program. John is also an altar server and Lydia sings in the choir. Shown: Fr. Theodore Heckman, and John and Lydia Yates.

St. John the Baptist, Edwardsville



A diocesan grammota was presented to the Centennial Committee and was accepted by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Podolak, Co-Chairs of the Committee and Mrs. Kathleen Harmanos, Parish Council President. Kathleen Harmanos was awarded the St. Tikhon's Medal for her many years of dedicated service to the parish, including 12 years as president, Church School volunteer, Co-Chair of the Ethnic Food Festival and choir member.

Christ the Saviour, Harrisburg

Grace Vernak was baptized on May 15th at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church by her grandfather, Fr. David Vernak. Serving also were Fr. Alexander Atty, Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk, and Fr. Stephen Vernak.



Holy Apostles, Mechanicsburg



(Above) The Blessing of the Carlisle Indian Cemetery
(Right) Our new Tomb built by Parishioner Joseph Kurtz Jr. as an Eagle Scout Project



WESTERN CULTURE AFTER CHRISTENDOM

Presenter

Tristram Engelhardt, Ph.D., M.D.



Wednesday, September 7, 7PM
University of Pennsylvania
Houston Hall, Benjamin Franklin Room (218)
3417 Spruce St.
Philadelphia, PA 19104



Dr. Engelhardt holds doctorates in philosophy and medicine and currently is professor of philosophy at Rice University and professor emeritus of medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. He formerly held the Rosemary Kennedy chair of the philosophy of medicine at the Kennedy Institute Center for Bioethics at Georgetown University.

In addition, he is senior editor of the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, *Christian Bioethics*, the *Philosophy and Medicine* book series, and the *Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture* book series. Among the books he has written are *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, *Global Bioethics*, and *Bioethics and Secular Humanism: The Search for a Common Morality*. Last year Ana Smith Iltis and Mark J. Cherry edited *At the Roots of Christian Bioethics*, a collection of essays on the thought of Dr. Engelhardt.

Dr. Engelhardt also is a tonsured Reader, member of the Medical/Ethics Commission of the Orthodox Church in America, and adjunct professor of bioethics and philosophy at St. Herman Seminary.

Lectures at other locations:

Thursday, September 8, 4:30PM

University of Scranton

Pearn Auditorium, Brennan Hall (Room 228)

Christian versus Secular Bioethics: Incompatible Visions of Morality and Reality

Friday, September 9, 4PM

Bucknell University, Trout Auditorium (Vaughn Literature Building)

Bioethics after Christendom: An Introduction to Some of the Moral Disputes Fragmenting Contemporary Western Culture

Saturday, September 10, 7PM (Vespers 6pm)

Holy Apostles Mission

5006 E. Trindle Rd. Ste 101, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

The Culture Wars: Why we Disagree about What Matters Most

Sunday, September 11, 2PM

St. Paul's Church, 156 E. Main St. Emmaus, PA 18049

Surviving in the Ruins of Christendom

Lecture series sponsored by the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania (Orthodox Church in America), University of Scranton, Bucknell University, and University of Pennsylvania.