



Worship Schedule

Great Vespers

Saturday Evenings, 6:00 PM

Confessions after Vespers or by appt.

Matins

Sunday Mornings, 8:00 AM

Divine Liturgy

Sunday Mornings, 9:00 AM

followed by a 15 minute

Adult Orthodoxy Lesson

-See calendar for feast day services-

Religious Education

Sunday Church School

Sunday Mornings, 8:30 AM

Chant Class

Tuesdays at 7:30 PM

Book Study

12:00 pm Fridays

Book discussion on the book "The Way of a Pilgrim"

At St. Vincent De Paul room

Unless noted, Services and Classes are held at:

*Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
224 S. Kendrick Street*



Directions from Interstate

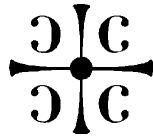
Highways: From I-17N proceed into Flagstaff. From I-40, take Exit 195 into Flagstaff. Once in Flagstaff, continue north on Milton Rd. Pass through five lights. The sixth light will be at Butler Av. Turn right onto Butler Av. Turn right at the entrance to Our Lady of Guadalupe between Kendrick St and Humpreys St. (Left turns are no longer allowed onto Kendrick Street)



Quarterly Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Mission of Northern Arizona
P.O. Box 2164 • Flagstaff, AZ 86003-2164 • Tel. (928) 774-8279 • <http://www.gomona.org>
Fr. Nicholas Andruchow, Priest

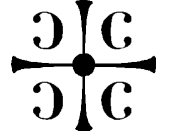
Volume 3, No. 1

Winter 2008



Pastoral Message

Fr. Nicholas Andruchow



Separation of Church and State?

This past September I received an email objecting to the absence of the countries motto "In God we trust" on the new dollar coins. My initial response was one of strong disappointment and then it was brought to my attention that the motto is still stamped on the coin but only now it is located on the side of the coin rather than on its face. This series of revelations lead to my interest of learning more about the role of religion in America and I asked the question "Is there any validity of a separation between Church and State?" Should the church be involved in politics? Should the government meddle in the affairs of religion? Should the country pledge allegiance to God or should the State affairs be thoroughly absent of any faith based dogmas? To answer these questions we need to have a sense of how Christianity has participated in past political issues and at the same time try to understand the intent of the founding fathers of this country who wanted to create a land where justice would prevail and freedom would flourish.

The letter of St. James states that "religion pure and undefiled ... is this, to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation." (James 1:27) The psalmist proclaims the need to "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy." (Ps. 82:3) Do these biblical commands only apply to us when our government is not involved? Are we not suppose to comment when children suffer because a state agency has lost their focus on their purpose? Are we to be silenced when the innocent die because of the wars in Africa over the diamond market? Or as a faith community do we not make a statement when millions are methodically wiped out due to one countries "political agenda" as happened in the Jewish Holocaust, in the Gulag in the Soviet Union, and in the Armenia Genocide? The obvious answer is NO. Christ was not concerned about offending his rulers at the time which within the Roman system was the high priests and leaders of the Temple. St. John the Baptist challenged the moral decadence of King Herod and lost his life for it. St. John Chrysostom from the 5th century continuously confronted the irresponsibility of the Byzantine Empress and was exiled three times which eventually lead to his death. Thousands of bishops, priests, and lay people died under the Communist regime because they stood up against the atrocities of that atheistic "political agenda". In the Scriptures and in the history of the Church we learn that there is not a separation of Church and State when it comes to putting a stop to injustices, but does this apply to 21st century America? To answer this question let us look closely at the foundation of this country which laid the roots to a political system that was established to protect the rights of all.

The first settlers by western man to the North American continent were motivated by varied reasons. The Jamestown, Virginia settlement was clearly formed for entrepreneurial aspirations compared to the Massachusetts colony which was founded more on the hopes of practicing the faith that they desired without the fear of persecution.

(continued next page)

No matter what the impetus was for the establishment of those communities it is clear that both of them were solidly based on the Christian tradition although at times quite fanatical and extremist by modern standards. Over the next century the country grew and at the same time its identity became more independent from the royal trappings of Great Britain. This eventually led to the 13 colonies of the Americas declaring its independence from its mother country for reasons of economic injustices, political abuses, and military persecution. This proclamation was ratified in the “Declaration of Independence” on July 4, 1776 which clearly stated the need for a sovereign government to protect the intrinsic rights of every one of its citizens. These violated rights were based on the God of Nature and Creator of men, as stated in the Declaration. Such men as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams clearly relied on God for their inspiration of having a country where “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness” could be held up as ideals and maintained as the expectation. The founding father’s connection to God is seen in their appeal to the “Supreme Judge” and the “protection of divine Providence” as stated in the Declaration of Independence. Some of these early molders of our country’s governmental system might not be considered as Christians in the strict sense of the word but they truly believed in the God who watched over them as they ambitiously sought independence from one of the world’s largest powers at the time. Thomas Jefferson proclaimed this clearly when he said God “watches over our country’s freedom and welfare”, “our efforts are in His hand and directed by it.”¹ God’s involvement in the formation of our country’s development was obvious in the eyes of those who directly influence it but the process of creating unity within the different colonies raised uncertainty of God’s involvement in our countries Constitution.

The United States, after the American Revolution, had the challenge of uniting a diverse ethnic, demographic, geographical and religious grouping of States into a cohesive republic. The authors of the Constitution needed to include the essential framework of how the country would operate and maintain unity, and at the same time not limit the diversity of its contingents through stereotypical norms of culture, politics and creeds. The founding fathers were well educated and pious men. Their piety is seen in such comments as from George Washington who looked to “the Almighty Being who rules over the universe”² or Benjamin Franklin who wrote “I believe in one God, creator of the universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped.”³ Also when James Madison reflected on the forming of the Constitution he states, “It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it (*the Constitution*) a finger of the Almighty hand ...”⁴ In addition to their belief in God, they also knew how history has proven very troublesome when a certain religion becomes formally adopted by a nation. With this in mind God was not mentioned once in the entire U.S. Constitution. This was done not so to encourage an atheistic country but rather allow for any person to freely practice what ever they might believe even if that means if they choose to believe in nothing. Striving for this balance of not requiring any practice of faith as law and also allowing the freedom of one’s own belief to be expressed has been maintained through the existence of the country. From Abraham Lincoln, to Theodore Roosevelt to our current political leaders we continue to discern the ambitious goal of having a country that respects the practice of all faiths but does not prevent the expressed belief of the majority. In my humble opinion it is not unconstitutional nor against the intent of our country’s founding fathers to pray in public, to have a Nativity scene in our front yard or to share our moral Christian beliefs in a political setting. What would be unconstitutional is to make baptism a requirement for US citizenship or to prohibit any public official, either a school teacher, the mayor of our city or the president of our country, from practicing their faith tradition. With this knowledge, we as Orthodox Christian need to hold our beliefs as standards for living a life of integrity and challenge our political system to respect our beliefs while not comprising anyone’s right to worship as they feel fit in this great country that defends the liberties of all.

¹ Meacham, John, *American Gospel*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, New York, NY, 2006 p.75

² Pg. 14

³ Pg. 21

⁴ Pg. 87

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

We are starting the process of creating a 5 year plan for our Church. We will be prayerfully evaluating the path God wants us to take in the following areas:

Philanthropy, Stewardship, Outreach, Finances and Education.

All are welcome to participate. If you would like to be a part of this process, contact Sandy Boyce at 928-203-1100 or Kathleen Park at 525-9489, or attend our **monthly planning sessions at 6:00 pm at St. Vincent De Paul Building on January 28th, February 25th, and March 31st, 2008.**





"ZORBA NIGHT"

Our fifth annual glendi, "Zorba Night", held on October 20th, was a huge success thanks to God and the hard work of *everyone!* This year featured some firsts for our fundraiser, including a live auction, a 'plaka' filled with Greek specialty items, and all-you-can-eat gyro stands! We netted over \$10,500 in funds, and of the proceeds, \$2,000 was raised by our live auction and dedicated to our building fund!

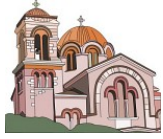
Our entire mission helped in every way possible, and that is truly a blessing. We were also blessed to have the guidance and help of Laila Armstrong this year. Laila is a professional fundraiser organizer and an excellent live auctioneer! Many thanks are sent to Laila and all our volunteers -- all of whom worked hard and long to make our glendi a fun experience for all!

Many thanks are also sent to our sponsors! The following businesses and people graciously donated auction items, door prizes, food, and more in support of our fundraiser. Now we have next year to look forward to. **OPA!**



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| Albertson's | Hebi Arts, Inc./ Daryl Wong | San Francisco de Asis Catholic School |
| Laila & Chuck Armstrong | Hitching Post Restaurant, (Sedona) / Bill Papparos | Sedona Offroad Adventures |
| Austin Productions, Inc. | Maria & Adrian Hreshchyshyn | Sedona Pines Resort |
| Humphrey's Bashas' | Tess Konomos & Paul Brinkmann | Shaklee Home Products / Kristen Coor |
| Woodland's Bashas' | Abbie & Jonn Lander | Shamrock Foods |
| Baskets and Such | La Quinta Inn (Sedona) | Select Wholesale Food & Spirits / Kostas Sotirhos |
| My Big Fat Greek Restaurant (Mesa) / George Liapis | Bill & Jean Miller | Nickolette and Takie Tavlarides |
| Sandy and Paul Boyce | Open Sesame Market (Phoenix) | Christina Tzavellas |
| Lisa Brollini | Potoula Pappas | Turtle Works (Winslow) / Bobbie Bealer |
| Chilli's Grill & Bar / Nick Kretsedemas | Pay-N-Take | The Rock Café (Cottonwood) |
| Coco's Restaurant / Nick Fakhoury | James & Tracy Poulos | Up from the Dust |
| Denton Accounting | Lou & Georgia Poulos | Athena & Jerry Vasilatos |
| Desert Quail Inn (Sedona) | Gaia Prlikan | Village Griddle (Sedona) |
| Elaine Dillingham | Regal Arts & Gifts | Verde Valley Community Supported Agriculture |
| Richard & Martha Downey | Saddlerock Barn (Sedona) | Walmart |
| Euro Deli (Sedona) / Swava Stachorski | Cedar Safeway | And an Anonymous Donor |
| Fry's | East Flagstaff Safeway | |
| Gifts Galore (Sedona) | Sedona Safeway | |
| Mary Grove | Emilie Saftoiu | |
| | Sam's Club | |





Building a House of God

By the grace of God, our Capital Campaign is on a path of success. Through the generous contributions of the faithful, we have collected \$140,100 with \$95,000 in additional pledges. This puts us well on our way to establishing the first permanent Orthodox Christian place of worship in Northern Arizona.

These individuals and families who have contributed in our fundraising efforts have our sincere gratitude. Please call 928 774 8279 or visit GOMONA.ORG for further information on ways you can help.

Honorary Founder \$25,000 and greater

Paul & Sandy Boyce

Jerry & Athena Vasilatos

Janet Morin

*In memory of Roger L. Morin,
Fr. Parry, Alex Harington,
Robert Owen & Inez Virginia*

Founder \$10,000 to \$24,999

Bette D. Maniatis

In memory of Mary Alvantides

Toula Howington

*In memory of Elpitha & Peter Kyparissakou
and Katy Demitra Drake*

Dn. Basil & Mary Rose Andruchow

Pete & Tammy

Kretsedemas

Randy & Helen Schulz

Ted & Bessie Demos

Charles & Elizabeth Beck

Lisa Brollini

Gus & Maria Demeris

Benefactor \$6,000 to \$9,999

Bill & Jean Miller

In memory of Peter & Georgia Georgakopoulos

Sue & Dan Neimy

David & Kathleen Park

George A. Howington

Sponsors \$1,000 to \$5,999

Abbie Lander

In memory of Maxine & Irving Feiler

Peter Cayias

Gregory Kleiner

In Memory of Mary Kleiner

Fr. Nicholas & Merilynn Andruchow

Deacon Seraphim & Mary Grove

In memory of Warren, Monica, Joseph, & Julia

Julie & Lew McCormick

Millan & Denice

Knezovich

Harris & Vicky Pappas

Supporters \$25.00 to \$999.00

Virginia Manatos

In Memory of George & Athena Manatos

Janetakias

Constantinos & Aspasia Germanakos

Katherine Jordan

John Saledas

Hercules Dellas

Themelis

Irene Canelos

In memory of George Canelos

Kay & Stan Coin

William Wafalsky

John & Linda Dexter

Calpakis

Phil & Helen Mitchell

Pauline Alexander

Olga & Nicholas Flouskados

George Kostas

Mary Lambros

Dr. Andreas & Mary Poulakidas

CJ & Marion Contes

Theodore & Maria Kotsonas

Maria & Vincent Sinisalchi

Xenophon & Helene Tsouprakos

Angeline Petroulakis-Miller

Jim & Connie Contes

Georgia & Sotirios Econopouly

Dr. Andreas & Mary Poulakidas

Margaret Dellas

Pat & Louis Katsos

Angela Hapgood

William & Andrea Potaris

Andrew Mitchell

Doris & Jim Demos

John & Linda Dexter

Christina Tzavellas

Maria & Adrian Hreshchyshyn

George & Faith Drapan

George & Angela

Joan Janetakias

Maria Schulz

John & Julie Galvin

Theologos & Dora

Dena Kantaros

Mary Demas

Christene Libbares

Connie Morfogen

Gregory & Melita

George Veres

Joanne & Theodore Lakis

Connie & James Contes

Maria Boyce

Dena Kantaros

P. J. Demas

Stewardship 2008

STEWARDSHIP



As of December 11, 2007, 29 of our stewards have returned their pledge forms for the year 2008; pledging a total of \$41,695. Thank you for being committed to our loving Jesus Christ through His Church. You see, being committed it is not a duty. It is a privilege. It is a blessing that comes from the heavens.

In Christ with love,
Toula

Thank you to our pledged stewards

Fr. Nicholas and Pres. Merilynn Andruchow
Phill & Helen Blommendahl
Anastasia Konomos and Paul Brinkmann
Lisa Brollini
Kristen Coor & Warren Sanford
Elaine Dillinham
Deacon Seraphim & Mary Grove
Estela Ene & Gabriel Gruionu
Angela Hapgood

Toula & James Howington
George A. Howington
Jody Gilson & James Howington
Jane Nicoletti- Jones & Lee Jones
Dale & Elpitha Kraus
Demetrios & Katherine Kretsedemas
Pete & Tammy Kretsedemas
Bette Maniatis
William & Jean Miller
Jan Morin

Daniel & Susan Neimy
Angelo & Potoula Pappas
Magdaline Pappas
David & Kathleen Park
Randy & Helen Schulz
Jessica & Joe Sorren
Augustine Smyth
Litsa St. Amand
Christopher and Katherine Staten
Theodore and Erica Tsouras

**** If you have returned a pledge prior to December 11th, and your name is not on this list, please call 928-774-8279 to notify us ****

Stewardship 2008 Pledge Distribution

Pledge Amount	# Stewards	Pledge Amount	# Stewards	Pledge Amount	# Stewards
\$5,001 - \$6,000.....	1	\$2,001 - \$3,000.....	5	\$501 - \$1000.....	8
\$4,001 - \$5,000.....	0	\$1,001 - \$2,000.....	5	\$1 - \$500.....	8
\$3,001 - \$4,000.....	5				

AVERAGE PLEDGE: \$1,437.76



GREEK ORTHODOX MISSION OF NORTHERN ARIZONA STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE: JANUARY, 2008 – DECEMBER, 2008

Name _____ Spouse _____
 Children, names and ages _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone Home _____ Work _____
 Signature _____ Date _____

Treasure

I/We joyfully pledge this amount to support the needs of the Greek Orthodox Mission of Northern Arizona.

\$ _____

Weekly Monthly
 Quarterly Annually

Time and Talent: I/We pledge to volunteer my time and talent to the Greek Orthodox Mission of Northern Arizona in the following areas:

Outreach Construction Coffee Hour Baking Greeters Parish Council Fund raising
 Sunday School Philanthropy Divine Liturgy/Vespers, set up and take down Other _____

Please mail to: Greek Orthodox Mission of Northern Arizona • P.O. Box 2164 • Flagstaff, Arizona 86003-2164

Stewardship Sunday Appeal

Presented November 25, 2007

I would like to welcome back all of you who have been away for Thanksgiving, welcome the ones that stayed in Flagstaff, and all together take a moment to let our imagination take us back to the day when the Indians shared with the starving Pilgrims the food that they had. I imagined that the Pilgrims were taken aback, and were very grateful and eager to give something back to Indians as an expression of their gratitude and thankfulness.

Now let ourselves be taken back 2000 years. Let ourselves feel the love our Lord God has for us. So much love that He did send His beloved son Jesus Christ down on earth for our sake. Jesus came with a commitment to God, His father, to save our souls. His commitment was so strong and His love so great that He gave His life through suffering and crucifixion for us.

Jesus ascended to Heaven and left His Church and the care of His Church, the Word, to His Apostles. The Apostles received this precious, life-giving, heavenly gift with love and a commitment to God to take care of it, to see it flourish and to give it unchanged to the world.

The Apostles had a commitment to the Lord, a commitment to each other, a commitment to the generations. Through the Apostolic Faith, our fore Fathers and Mothers endured suffering, persecution and sacrifices over the years to preserve and strengthen this treasure we call the Orthodox Church -- His Church that we are standing in today, in front of the Altar, committing ourselves to take care of His Church through the talents and the blessings He has given us.

We are talking about the Christian Stewardship -- the Orthodox Way of Life, which is reverence, respect and responsibility. We are reverent to God and to those who serve His Church, our priest. We love and respect our church and our church family. We show this respect by loving and caring for one another as Christ loves and cares for us, by worshiping together, and enjoying one another's fellowship. A church united will grow. As Stewards, we are responsible for growing His Church and providing the ministries and programs to meet the needs of His people. We are thankful to God for all the blessings we receive, and as an expression of gratitude and appreciation, we must give back to our Lord for His Church and to His Church.

Let us commit ourselves to one another and all our life to Lord our God. Let us commit ourselves to the ones who are seeking the true Apostolic church, and to the generations to come. Let us worship Him and give back to Him in proportion to our blessings. Let us not ask what your Church can do for you, ask what you can do for your Church.

Let us show our faith, reverence and love for God. Let us give to God from His gifts. Let us pledge.



Testimony

When I was asked recently to talk about what the Orthodox Church means to me – my first thought was how do I describe what is becoming for me my life's blood? For Scripture tells us that it is in Him that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). My road to Orthodoxy was not an easy one. I was raised Catholic and as an adult I became Protestant. The Protestant Church we belonged to was a fundamentalist Church. It was extremely legalistic. Because of the legalism, it is enough to say that it was often spiritually abusive, especially to women. What I had known about God and what I experienced in the Church was diametrically opposed. There were so many times when I cried out to the Lord, "if You are there let me find you." Little did I know....

I decided to go to a Bible College and get my BS degree in Bible and Theology. I thought maybe I would find Him there. It was my junior year and I was taking this class called "Fundamentals of Worship." As an assignment I had to experience an alternative worship style. So it just so happened that God placed before me this little blue flyer that said "Come and experience Orthodoxy at St. Peter and Paul's Church in Ben Lomond, Ca." I wasn't sure what Orthodoxy was but I knew it had to be an alternative worship style. So I called Denise, the contact person on the flyer. To this day I swear she said Vespers began at 5:00. It was a 45 minute drive over the hill to the Church and I got there promptly at 5 pm. A Priest came out and met me and asked if he could help. I said "I am here for Vespers." To which he replied, "Vespers does not begin until 7.00 pm and I do not know why Denise would tell me 5 because she works at the Church as she should know that Vespers started at 7!"

Continued on next page

St. Peter and Paul's is a beautiful, domed Church and the Priest was Father Luke Dingman, the Iconographer. I spent two hours with Him learning about Icons and what the interior of an Orthodox Church looks like.

As we walked through the Church I remember thinking of King David of old, who said in the Psalms "Blessed are those who love the beauty of Your house." It made sense to me that God would dwell in beauty. Very different from the high school gymnasiums I was used to worshipping in as a Protestant.

Then it was 7:00pm and Vespers started. I watched as people came in and lit candles. And remembered thinking - if Jesus is light of the world - there should be candles. And when the antiphonal singing began, I thought of the angels and how they sing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." I remember thinking it made sense that there should be singing because that is what the angels do in the presence of God. And there was a reverence there that caught my attention. I did not understand it fully. But it tugged at my heart. My head was spinning and I had not even made it to a Liturgy. I was so excited to go over the hill the next morning and experience the Liturgy.

Because of my studies at the Bible College and subsequent Seminary, I knew God as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And so as the Liturgy progressed I knew that this was worship that befits a King. I knew in my heart of hearts I had found Him. And I never left. But I must say I did not enter in either. I was content to experience this Kingly worship on the side and from afar.

Truthfully it was not until I moved here to Flagstaff to this Church that God began calling me to enter in more fully. Maybe He was calling me the whole time I just wasn't listening. And so to go back to that question, what does this Church mean to me - It is a gift - from God - in order for us to know Him.

And what I have come to understand is this--Everything with in Orthodoxy draws us to Him, and gives Him back to us.

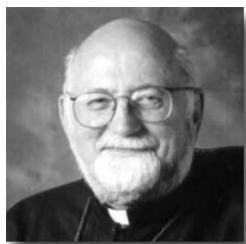
The sacraments--In the Sacrament of Baptism we put Him on, in the Sacrament of Eucharist we take Him in and when we fall in our humanity the Sacrament of Confession draws us back to Him.

The Church, the Liturgy, the singing, the icons, the candles - it is worship that befits a King. And because it is true worship it satisfies my soul.

This community - I am not in this alone. We have one another. And this is a great community. The Bible Study, Sunday school, the learning that goes on here, draws us ever closer to God. I even learned recently that when living in this world becomes to much we can go to the Monastery and experience a little heaven on earth.

So I say all of this and I don't know how well I said it but for me - The Orthodox Church in general and this Church specifically provides the means by which I live and move and have my being in God. I pray that this Church will be around for a long, long time. I pray that our Priest, Fr. Nicholas and Presbyteria and their family will be with us for a long time as well.

Thank You.
Lisa Brollini



An Orthodox Spiritual Check-up Retreat

Are you curious about your level of spiritual fitness? Just what does your spiritual health meter read? Come to Flagstaff and learn how spiritually fit you and receive some tools of how to get and stay in shape.

Retreat will be lead by Fr. Nick Triantafilou the president of Holy Cross Seminary & Hellenic College!

Location: Newman Center - Flagstaff, AZ

When: Saturday, February 23, 2008

Lunch will be provided. Suggested donation \$20.

To RSVP please contact the Greek Orthodox Mission of Northern Arizona's Office at 928-774-8279 or email priest@gomona.org

Mission News



Nursing Home Ministry

More visits are planned for 2008, so mark these dates on your calendar: Jan. 12th, Feb. 9th, March 29th, April 12th, May 17th, and June 21st. Meet at Our Lady of Guadalupe at 9 am to drive over together. We usually spend about one hour visiting individual rooms from 9:30-10:30, then, time permitting, go for coffee. Even though this ministry is only once a month, activities director, Coleen McGrath, assured us that it is an important one. Some of the residents have no family that visit. We are also looking for new ways to bring some happiness into the lives of those who can't get out in the world much, or not at all. On March 29th, the Sunday School children will deliver plants to some of the residents. Ms. McGrath said that a popular activity is bingo. If you would be interested in helping with bingo, have another idea for an activity, or need more information, contact Mary Grove at 928-226-1882 or mgfgrrove@hotmail.com



Church School Events

Please mark your calendars for the following events, and watch for more details to come!

January 26

Ice Skating, time

February 23:

Brunch Prep., time

February 24:

Brunch Sale, time

March 29:

Nursing Home Visit & Confessions

April 25:

Holy Friday Retreat

May 18:

End of year presentations
And last day of the 07-08
Church School year



Good Tidings We Bring

Nursing Home Ministry

On Saturday, December 15th, young and old gathered at Infinia Nursing Home for caroling. Leaflets of carols were supplied by Sandy and Paul Boyce. Jane Nicolletti-Jones accompanied the GOMNA singers on guitar. Many helped with their voices and hands as we made ornaments and holiday jewelry with the residents using materials donated by Elaine Dillingham. It's impossible to name you all here, but a huge thank you to everyone who participated.



Bookstore and Library

Announcing new items in our Bookstore including baptism, chrismation and wedding candles, icons from Greece, small gift items and **our own Mission Cookbook!**

Also, coming this mid-February, the long awaited translation of the Orthodox Old *and* New Testament Bible. I will be excited to see you come and browse, and utilize my corner!

Love,

Toula

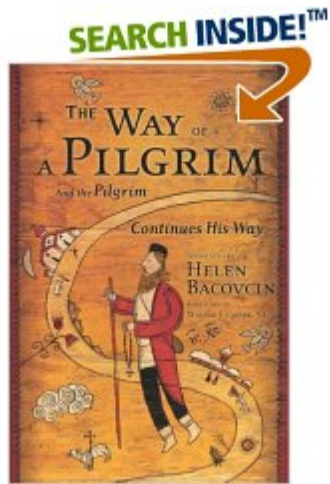
News From Iraq



Hello Father,

Nice to hear from you. Christmas is near and some decorations are around the camp but they are low key so as not to offend the muslim majority. I will be attending Catholic services on Christmas eve and day. Christmas is really a sad time for most of the troops as they have young families at home and they become quite depressed. Us older folks have to keep them busy so they won't go under. We have some guys in our unit that are experiencing bouts of depression. We just don't leave them alone and always make ourselves available as a sounding board. I'm sorry I can't give you an upbeat account of the holidays here but this is the reality for our young troops so when you see a service member remember what they go through and tell them thanks for the sacrifice. I'll see you all in January.

Merry Christmas
Nick Lucas
'Haji Nick'
Camp Ramadi
An Bar Province



The Way of a Pilgrim (Book Study)

"The Way of a Pilgrim" is a classic but anonymous work of Russian spirituality (a.k.a "the Way of the Pilgrim") which has charmed countless readers with its account of a nineteenth-century peasant seeking the truth with simple humility, finding joy in the practice of the **"Jesus Prayer."** This repetitive prayer, traditional in the Christian East, centers on the holy name of Jesus and enables the pilgrim to fulfill the seemingly impossible command of St. Paul in I Thessalonians 5:17 to ***"pray always."***

Book study will be held every Friday at 12:00 PM at the St. Vincent de Paul Room next to Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel. The class will begin on January 11th. For more information or to acquire a book contact the church office 774-8279 or Toula Howington at 774-0858

College News Orthodox Christian Fellowship



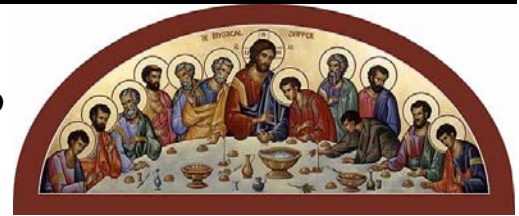
(OCF Christmas dinner at Father's)

I cannot believe how fast this semester went! We have had so much fun this semester, even though we were all very busy. We did not get done quite as much as we would have hoped this semester but I know next year will be very well taken care of. Everyone is very excited for the trip to Greece in March (instead of the Dominican Republic now)...and I am sure you will be kept up to date with all of the fundraising that will take place next semester. The first fundraiser will be held Sunday February 10th after church. Hopefully we can continue to bring in new members not only to the club, but to church as well next semester. It has been such a blessing to have an orthodox church so close to NAU, and I thank each and every one of you for welcoming us college students into your hearts. It has been such a pleasure working with my fellow college students during this difficult time in our lives, and to know that such a strong community is there to help us is such a wonderful aspect of our community. I look forward to coming back in January 2009 and seeing what wonderful things not only OCF has accomplished, but our mission as well. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

-Adrienne Allen
President of NAU's OCF
(Adrienne will be leaving the NAU community till Jan. 2009 as she studies for 2 semesters over seas.
Good luck Adrienne!)



(Masha a graduate student from NAU preforms a traditional dance from her home country Kazakhstan)



Donation for Icon Repair

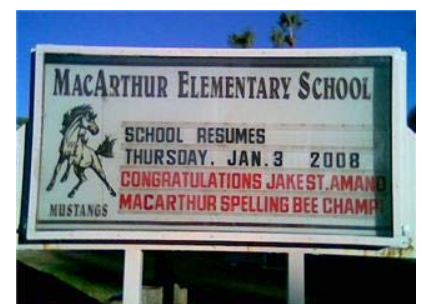
Having to assemble and disassemble our iconostasis once, twice and sometimes three times a week has had its' toll on our liturgical items. One in particular is the Last Supper icon which goes above the royal doors and was donated by the Kretsedemas family in memory of Constantina Kretsedemas. The image itself needs repair work and also a storage case needs to be fabricated to prevent future damage. The estimated cost are expected to run close to \$300. Donations are being accepted to restore this divine image of our weekly worship. For more information concerning icon or how to donate contact the church office at (928) 774-8279.



Congratulations Jake!

Spelling Bee Winner

Jake St. Amand (Litsa's son; Toula and J's grandson) won his school's Spelling Bee, and his name is now in "lights" (see marquee!) Please wish him luck as he proceeds to the second level of competition on January 12, 2008.



Medical Advances and Medical Bioethics: Impact on Our Life as Orthodox Christians

Part 1 – The Beginning of Life

By Protodeacon Basil Andruchow

Introduction

The advances in modern medicine have resulted in a tremendous amount of benefit to people whereby previously fatal conditions are routinely corrected allowing individuals to lead normal and extended lives. Yet, for all of these beneficial advances, there are practices which grievously concern us as Orthodox Christians. Some of these concerns deal with the practices of *in-vitro* fertilization, abortion, stem cell research and cloning during the Beginning-of-Life, and euthanasia/mercy killing, aggressive life support, proper palliative care and pain management during the End-of-life.

The purpose of this article is to review and comment on some of these practices as they relate to the Beginning of Life and the End of Life stages of human development in the context of our Orthodox faith. The article is presented in two parts: the first will deal with the Beginning of Life issues while the second part, the End of Life issues, will be in the 2nd quarterly issue, 2008, of GOMONA.

The Beginning of Life

God's Creative Event

First and foremost and for the purposes of our discussion, it is important that we remind ourselves that our Orthodox Church not only teaches us that all life is sacred but also human life is fully present at the time of conception, i.e., at the merging of the father's sperm with the mother's ovum nucleus to produce what is called the zygote. The zygote is considered to be endowed with God's great gift of life, human personhood, is recognized to be a genetically unique individual and is considered to be totipotent, i.e., it has the ability to produce a biologically complete human being. From this point on the person develops on a continuous journey that will hopefully and ultimately lead to eternal communion with his/her creator, our God, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is easy to see why our Church is so against abortion, overt (Abortion Clinics, Embryonic Stem Cell Harvesting) and covert (Morning after Pill).

Medical Reproductive Medicine and In-Vitro Fertilization

One of the more tantalizing medical procedures, particularly for couples who cannot have or are having a difficult time having children, has been developed as the result of research in Reproductive Medicine, namely – *in vitro* fertilization. The procedure, in principle, is somewhat straightforward. First a number of eggs are obtained by chemically stimulating a woman's ovaries. A specimen of the man's sperm is also obtained. The two are combined under controlled conditions and fertilization is allowed to occur. This results in the generation of a number of embryos, which are allowed to develop to a certain stage, selected for viability and then placed back into the woman with the hope that at least one will develop to a full term infant.

First of all, from our Orthodox Church's perspective the procedure divorces the reproductive act from the conjugal act of love, which God has intended to be the natural consequence of His creation of man and woman. Second, the procedure produces a number of human persons, which are simply treated as 'raw material' to be stored for possible ambiguous future use. Third, the viable embryo selection process uses methodology, which essentially eliminates the possibility of having a child with undesirable birth defects, a form of negative eugenics (selective breeding). And fourth, the left over embryos are being used and destroyed to obtain and study stem cells, more of which will be discussed, below. In brief, the entire process ignores the sanctity and dignity of the created human person.

Continued on next page

Stem Cell Research and Cloning

Embryonic Stem Cell (ESC) research requires that viable embryos, which are generally provided by Reproductive Clinics, be destroyed in order to obtain the stem cells. Stem cells are considered to be pluripotent which means that they can be coaxed to become other very specific cells, e.g., pancreatic cells (diabetes), liver (hepatitis), lung tissue, muscle tissue, etc. However, embryonic stem cells have limited use and some potential dangers. The use of stem cells taken from 'left over' embryos poses rejection problems for the patient and, in certain cases, stem cells are known to produce cancerous tumor growths.

Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) on the other hand, more commonly known as cloning, is a technique which holds equal promise but without the rejection problems. SCNT involves the removal of the ovum nucleus of a female egg and replacing it with a somatic (body) cell taken from donor, e.g., a skin cell. The newly nucleated egg 'recognizes' the presence of the 46 chromosome entity and regresses it into a totipotential single cell 'zygote', genetically equivalent to the donor, which can be used without fear of rejection. However, no matter how we may have come to this point in a laboratory, we have provided the conditions whereby a human person is created. To date, there has never been and hopefully never will be an infant born from a SCNT generated 'zygote'. Further, the medical community has uniformly condemned this use of SCNT for reproductive purposes. Yet, we still must face the fact that the harvesting of these stem cells is still considered to be abortion.

A new technique was just recently announced in the newspapers as "avoiding the controversial creation and destruction of embryos." This process takes an adult cell (skin cell) and genetically reprograms the cell to regress to an embryonic stem-cell-like state. While the process is certainly revolutionary, it is in what is called early stage development and much work still remains to be done. This methodology would seemingly mitigate the ethical concerns raised by ECS and SCNT research. In the meantime, research will still continue using embryonic and cloned stem cells.

Some Closing Thoughts

Medical Research and Development is still a long way off from developing viable and universally available therapies based on stem cells. In the meantime, it is very important that we, as Orthodox Christians, be able to a certain degree present as accurately as we can our Church's teachings relative to contemporary Medical Bioethical issues. It is especially important when we find ourselves in the middle of these discussions and/or, where occasioned, to correctly guide our fellow Orthodox when they ask questions concerning Medical Bioethics.

It is equally important to realize that, if any consideration is being given to using some of the aforementioned medical procedures, it should not be undertaken lightly. Considerations of this type certainly constitute a pastoral concern. Guidance should be solicited from one's parish priest and/or spiritual advisor because, in addition to the spiritual well being of an individual or couple, more often than not other people are involved and will be affected by the decision.

A Bit on the End of Life

What we have said about the sanctity and dignity of the pre-born applies to all our life's dealings with people at the end of their life, particularly those whom we call our 'loved-ones', our family. One of the most heart wrenching times of our life comes when we are faced with watching one of our loved-ones die. There is much to be said about the dying process and the medical procedures that are available and, which may be applied when one is dying. We will discuss a number of these procedures and comment on the dying state in Part 2 of this article

Sayings of our Holy Fathers

The Writings of Staretz Silouan:
Adam's Lament

O Adam, our father, tell us, thy sons, of the Lord.
Thy soul didst know God on earth,
Knew paradise too, and the sweetness and gladness thereof,
And now thou livest in heaven and dost behold the glory of the Lord.
Tell of how our Lord is glorified for His sufferings.
Speak to us of the songs that are sung in heaven, how sweet they are,
For they are sung in the Holy Spirit.
Tell us of the glory of the Lord, of His great mercy and how He loveth His creature.
Tell us of the Most Holy Mother of God, how she is magnified in the heavens,
And thy hymns that call her blessed.
Tell us how the Saints rejoice there, radiant with grace. Tell us how they love the Lord in what humility they stand before God.
O Adam, comfort and cheer our troubled souls.
Speak to us of the things thou dost behold in heaven... Why art thou silent?...
Lo, the whole earth is in travail... Art thou so filled with the love of God that thou canst not think of us?
Or thou beholdest the Mother of God in glory and canst not tear thyself from the sight,
And wouldst not bestow a word of tenderness on us who sorrow, that we might forget the affliction there is on earth?
O Adam, our father, thou dost see the wretchedness of thy sons on earth.
Why then art thou silent?
And Adam speaks:
"My children, leave me in peace.
I cannot wrench myself from the love of God to speak with you.
My soul is wounded with love of the Lord and rejoices in His beauty.
How should I remember the earth?
Those who live before the Face of the Most High cannot think on earthly things.'
O Adam, our father, thou has forsaken us, thine orphans, though misery is our portion here on earth.
Tell us what we may do to be pleasing to God?

Look upon thy children scattered over the face of the earth, our minds scattered too.
Many have forgotten God.
They live in darkness and journey to the abysses of hell.
Trouble me not. I see the Mother of God in glory-
How can I tear myself away to speak with you?
I see the holy Prophets and Apostles, and all they are in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.
I walk in the gardens of paradise, and everywhere behold the glory of the Lord.
For the Lord is in me and hath made me like unto Himself.

Parish Council News

With the new year we also begin the start of a new parish council. We would like to thank Toula Howington and Tammy Kretsedemas for their years of hard work and dedication to the parish council. Their involvement will be missed, but we are sure their skills will continue to be utilized in other ways within our church community.

We would also like to welcome Lisa Brollini and Dave Park as the new members to the parish council. Their official swearing in date will be Sunday, January 6. All are encouraged to participate following Divine Liturgy.

For The Record...

New Catechumens

Matthew Maxwell
&
Kelly Barber

*We welcome both of you
to our
Orthodox Community!*



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