

THE WONDERWORKER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN RITE COMMUNITIES OF ROCOR

ADVENT 2019



“He must increase, but I must decrease.

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

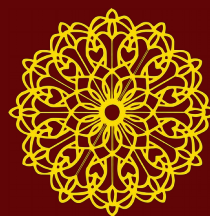
And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”

(John 3:30-35)





FROM THE VICAR'S DESK



“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

(Matthew 1: 21-23)

Brethren,

We have entered the Holy Season of Advent. As we enter into such an important Holy Season, may something of this Holy Season likewise enter into each of us. It is my prayer that we attempt to re-awaken a sense of the sacred. Not only should we desire this for ourselves, but for others, and for so many whose lives are empty or broken.

This Jesus in the Scripture quoted above; we are told that He shall come forth to save His people from their sins. From the ancient Prophets to today, this Jesus is who we await in the season of expectation that we call Advent, and which culminates at the Nativity. In the Feast of the Nativity- the great Feast of the Incarnation of Christ, we see the second part of the quote from Scripture above come forth. Emmanuel- “*God with us*” is to be found in a cave at Bethlehem. The Gospel of John tells us each Sunday, “*And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.*”

As we begin Advent, we also begin our journey toward the crib in the cave at Bethlehem. Along the way, the Church reminds us of our concurrent journey toward *theosis* as well. Increasing our sense of the sacred serves and assists us toward that end. Normally, this would seem to be of great comfort, but for some reason it is not something many Orthodox Christians are comfortable with.





Unfortunately, our comfort levels, desires and passions all too frequently rule the day. Daily prayer, fasting, and reading of Scripture and the Church Fathers are relegated to less of a priority status, while worldly pursuits of things transitory have a leading and spiritually unhealthy influence on our lives. Advent provides us the necessary spiritual prompt to re-examine our spiritual lives and priorities and seek holiness. Much of this Advent will be like previous years, but not everything. This is an Advent we have not had before. The world has changed, and most likely

not for the better. Babies have been born, loved ones have died, and children continue to grow up. Much changes in the world, and so do we.

What has not changed, however, is the message of Advent. The message of Advent tells us of God's love for us, and our need for that love and His grace. We remember that *'God so loved the world that He sent his only-begotten Son; that all those who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'* (John 3:16). This Son, Emmanuel, *'God with us'* is the Jesus mentioned in Saint Matthew's Gospel above, who comes to save us from our sins.

We are created in the image of God, and through Holy Baptism and Chrismation we are made Children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the true gift of Christmas. Our whole life in some ways is our Advent, our time of expectation to prepare fully for the moment when we, God willing, achieve *theosis*.

This Advent, I pray that we listen to the solemn words of Saint John, the Forerunner and Baptist seek to prepare a way in our lives and hearts to receive Emmanuel, *'God with us'*. May we rediscover our sense of what is sacred, and give it priority in our lives. May we be drawn further down along our road toward theosis and a little deeper into the Mystery of the Incarnation. May our reinvigorated sense of the sacred in our spiritual lives become a strong witness to the world of the love of God toward us. May we have the courage to open our hearts and minds in cooperation with God's grace and allow God to make us holy, for He is good and loves mankind.

A Blessed Advent and Nativity to all, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

Archpriest Mark





3rd Annual ROCOR Western Rite Youth Summer Camp

Monday, July 20 – Friday, July 24, 2020



Monastery of the Glorious Ascension, (ROCOR) Resaca, Georgia



STS. PETER & PAUL IN OMAHA NEBRASKA



As Sts. Peter & Paul continues to prepare for its Orthodox outreach to the local Hispanic community in Omaha, NE, several encouraging signs are developing. After several meetings, the local Episcopal ordinary has strongly indicated his enthusiastic interest in facilitating Orthodox Christian outreach to the local Hispanic community by allowing us to rent one of diocese's church buildings. We anticipate that we will begin having Spanish services beginning the first Sunday of January. Currently, we are entering the final phase of reaching an agreement with the Diocese of Nebraska to begin using a historic traditional Anglican Church located directly in the heart of the Hispanic community. The Church is registered with the National Registry of Historic Places and is the first Anglican Church constructed in Nebraska, having been built in 1899. Notwithstanding its age, the congregation has immaculately maintained the building in accordance with its original design and construction.



Although we have faced early challenges with the current lack of a permanent place of worship, inquirers are visiting who are attracted to the traditional worship and beliefs of the Orthodox Church and have expressed interest in learning more and seeing the Liturgy being made available in Spanish. With that in mind, Fr. Dn. Seraphim Cervantes is preparing to serve a version of the Rite of St. Gregory, entirely in Spanish. It is believed this will assist our inquirers in settling in to our community and in pursuing

their interest in learning more about Orthodoxy.

Reaching out to the local Hispanic community using English for the Liturgy has been a challenge. We are looking forward to providing a Spanish Liturgy for this community in the near future which we anticipate will bolster attendance and spread the word of our new community. At least in North America, there are only two languages in which people can attend the Rite of St. Gregory: English and Latin. By providing the Liturgy in Spanish we aim to make traditional western worship more accessible to Spanish-speaking peoples.





Rachel's Corner

THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES BATTLE TO SAVE CIERRA MARIE, THE UNBORN CHILD OF A MENTALLY HANDICAPPED MOM

Submitted by Fr. William Bauer

*(*A story originally published by NRL News and authored by Melissa Clement on)May 9, 2013*

Melissa was part of that band of heroes and she graciously agreed to provide us with “the rest of the story.”

“When the time comes, as it surely will, when we face that awesome moment, the final judgment, I’ve often thought, as Fulton Sheen wrote, that it is a terrible moment of loneliness. You have no advocates, you are there alone standing before God — and a terror will rip your soul like nothing you can imagine. But I really think that those in the pro-life movement will not be alone. I think there’ll be a chorus of voices that have never been heard in this world but are heard beautifully and clearly in the next world — and they will plead for everyone who has been in this movement. They will say to God, ‘Spare him, because he loved us!’” — Congressman Henry Hyde

Since joining the movement 13 years ago, this quote has always motivated and comforted me. My pro-life efforts have focused on education, policy, legislation, and elections. As such, I have always looked forward to meeting the “choir” – the babies I saved, unknowingly.

I am not a sidewalk counselor or a crisis pregnancy center volunteer or a maternity home social worker. I lack the skills and the mental toughness necessary to be that kind of hero. So, long ago, I made peace with the fact that the babies I would save would most likely be unknown to me in this lifetime.

That changed last October. I received a call that changed many lives and, in the end, saved one.

The voice on the end of the other line was frantic, “I need the name of a good pro-life attorney and a good pro-life OB-GYN in Reno.” The details were sparse due to the nature of the case. All I knew was that there was a young woman who was going to be forced to abort her child.

None of the information that I heard made sense and part of me wondered if I was the victim of a prank because certainly, in this day and age, in this country, no woman could be forced to abort her child by a judge. I supplied the name and contact information for two pro-life men, an attorney and an OB-GYN, with the guarantee that they were very able and very pro-life. I figured that was the end. Perhaps another choir member added, but it wasn’t mine to know.

Later that day I received a call from Jason Guinasso, the attorney I had recommended. He told me the facts of the case, the Bauer case, and even now they are unbelievable. A county judge was in the process of ordering Elisa Bauer, a 32 year old mentally disabled woman, to abort her baby against her wishes and the wishes of her parents/guardians. Because her parents and guardians chose to support the growing life within Elisa, the judge had appointed new guardians and a new attorney and the wheels were set in motion to abort the baby and sterilize Elisa.



Reno Attorney Jason Guinasso

Jason accepted the case and, with little preparation time and a recognition that this was an uphill battle at best, tilting at windmills at worst, he began to craft a defense of this baby’s life. His efforts were nothing short of heroic.

What was my role in this life and death struggle? I listened, took notes, worked to get the word out through social media, badgered old media, contacted medical and legal experts recommended by fellow state directors of NRLC and prayed.

After sitting through several hearings, it was apparent that many people outside of Elisa’s family were concerned and wanted the best course of action for her. The problem was there was a very stark contrast between the two choices considered in that courtroom. It was a stark clash of worldviews.

One side viewed pregnancy as a medical condition best “remedied” through termination when a perfect child and a perfect mother is not guaranteed.

The worldview represented by the Bauer’s attorney, Jason Guinasso, presented a calm and rational alternative. Namely that a physically healthy mother and a healthy baby can be supported throughout the pregnancy, even when the circumstances are not ideal, and that a number of qualified adoptive parents stand ready to raise this baby.

Over the course of the three hearings, I watched as the culture of life prevailed. The bias against life, so apparent from the opposing side during the first hearing, thawed, and in the end, all parties involved gathered and

informally discussed the issues involved and agreed that the most pressing issue must be dealt with first, the pregnancy.

Judge Walker entered court on Tuesday, November 14, 2012, and announced that an abortion was no longer an alternative.

As her attorney, Jason Guinasso wrote recently,

“...Yesterday, Cierra Maria was born to Elisa Bauer. She is five pounds and seven ounces and approximately 17 inches long. Her APGAR scores were 8 and 9. She has a lot of dark hair and a nice pink skin tone. She is sweet and good natured. By all measures, she is perfectly healthy and sublimely beautiful. Thanks to your prayers several months ago, this is the child we helped bring into the world...”

My role in this story was humble. I was merely a connector, a conduit. But it is a story we all need to hear. We all have a role to play in saving lives.

It is also an example of the strength of National Right to Life. This fantastic, diverse network of grassroots volunteers and professionals allowed us to tap into the talents of countless medical, legal and media experts, all of whom worked to save this baby's life.

Perhaps, seeing Cierra's picture today will give them a glimpse of their own choir.



Editor's note: Many pro-lifers were part of the ultimately successful campaign to prevent the forced abortion of a mentally disabled woman. Elisa Bauer delivered her baby, Cierra Marie, on May 2. She weighed 5 lbs., 7 oz. and measuring 17 inches long.

Cierra Bauer at age 5 - with no disabilities



Why is this Saint, almost uniquely, shown in many icons with wings?

As well as “the Baptist”, John is also known as “glorious prophet and forerunner of Christ”. Therefore, the presence of the wings is to symbolize John’s status as a divine messenger (in Greek “*Evangelos*”, from where the word “Angel” is derived). It’s worth noting that the wings of the archangels (Gabriel, Michael etc.) in icons are largely symbolic too, as they are not specifically described as having wings in the Scriptures.

But if that were all, then why aren’t the prophets of the Old Testament, or the Apostles, shown with the angelic wings of divine messenger? The answer, in the words of Jesus Christ Himself, is because “among those born of women there is no one greater than John;” moreover, he is “the culmination and the crown of the prophets”, as the hymn from the feast of John’s nativity proclaims. Therefore, St John is a special example among the Saints of an earthly “angel” and a heavenly man. As such, he is also described as the “Angel of the Desert” in the

inscriptions of icons.

The life John led in the desert was angelic for two reasons. On the one hand he proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, becoming a herald of God like the angels. On the other, he lived a life of chastity, abstinence, and prayer, not being mindful of material needs, but with his attention fixed firmly to heaven. This is the life of the angels, and why the monastic way of life is sometimes called “angelic”, as well as why St John is the patron of monastics, hermits, and ascetics. For both reasons, it is appropriate to show St John with the spiritual wings of a dove.

WELCOME CATECHUMEN MICHAEL TO ST. CUTHBERT'S IN RHODE ISLAND!!!



St. Cuthbert's has a new catechumen! Darren, now Michael, has been watching from afar for quite some time and finally decided to 'come home'. May the prayers of the Holy Archangel Michael the Standard-Bearer ever guide and guard Michael as walks on the pathway of salvation.

All of heaven rejoices at the turning to God of one who was lost. We welcome Michael and pray that God will bring to completion this good work that He has begun in him!!!



THE ASCETICISM OF FASTING: THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY FAST

Igumen Nektary (Morozov)

A time of self-restraint and a time of prayer, a time of temptations and a time of joys: All of these relate to fasting—a special period in the life of every Orthodox Christian. Igumen Nektary (Morozov), the rector of the Church of the “Assuage My Sorrows” Icon of the Mother of God, speaks on the significance of the [Nativity Fast](#) and on the importance of even the very smallest ascetic podvig and the anticipation of the celebration.



Icon from the Cave of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem. Photo: A. Pospelov / Pravoslavie.Ru

—We are used to holidays being a time of joy. Why do Orthodox Christians fast before the most significant celebrations?

—A holiday in the secular understanding and in the Church understanding are completely different things. In the world, preparation for a holiday means a shopping trip, making sure the table is covered with various foods, and thinking about how to occupy and entertain your guests. Such an approach is purely earthly. A Church feast is a celebration of another, spiritual order, giving believers the opportunity, through the remembrance of this or that event of sacred history, to touch the heart to another, Heavenly reality, and experience in all its fullness the joy of this amazing, incomparable touch.

But man consists of spirit, soul, and body. And his spirit and soul in his daily life are in a downtrodden, suppressed state—the body rules with its needs, habits, and pleasures. In order to give the spirit freedom in its striving for God, we have to “oppress” our flesh, at least somehow limiting its sometimes rather capricious demands. This way of self-restraint is [fasting](#). In one form or another, such as restraint from excesses, it should always be present in the life of an Orthodox Christian. But throughout the Church year, there are particular periods specifically dedicated to greater temperance—the multi-day fasts, one of which is the Nativity Fast.

—It’s also known as the “Philip’s” Fast...

—Yes, because it begins on the day after the commemoration of the holy apostle Philip, on November 15/28. But it ends on Nativity, celebrated on December 25/January 7, and thus it lasts forty days. According to its regulations on food, it’s not the strictest. On Saturdays and Sundays, and also on feast days with a polyeleos, [1](#) if they don’t land on a Wednesday or Friday, the Nativity Fast allows for eating fish, and the rest of the days—no meat or dairy. The last few days are the strictest part of the fast, during the forefeast—from December 20/January 2 to December 24/January 6 inclusive. On these days, even if they fall on a Sunday or Saturday or some feast, fish is not allowed. And the strictest day of all is the [eve of Nativity](#), when, according to the Church typikon, it is customary to eat food only in the evening, with the appearance of the “first star” in the sky (around 4:00 or 5:00 PM).

—We’re talking now about the bodily side of the fast. But fasting is also necessary for the soul, correct?

—Yes, of course. Fasting bodily, we have to remember that the most important thing is the spiritual fast. Therefore, if someone limits himself in food but doesn’t go to church, but participates in some kind of entertainment or amusement, then his fasting will not bring tangible benefits—it will just be some kind of “[diet](#),” nothing more. Without prayer during the services, it’s basically impossible to understand the inner meaning of the fast. Fasting for a Christian is a time when he can more substantially labor over his soul: to struggle within himself with those shortcomings with which he usually puts up with out of cowardice, to try to cultivate virtues within himself, which he realizes he has been unsuccessful at thus far. Then, the day of the feast, as the crown of his fasting, becomes a day of genuine joy and genuine spiritual celebration.

—What is the day of the Nativity to a believer?

—For us, the Nativity is the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the new, that which the Old Testament righteous awaited with everyone who preserved faith in the true God from the moment that our forefathers transgressed the sole commandment that was given by God to the first-created Adam. This event, which changed the fate of mankind, is the beginning of our salvation.

The Church service itself prepares man for such an understanding of the Nativity. In the days of the forefeast (December 20/January 2-December 24/January 6), the same thought: “Christ is born, Christ is coming,” astounding in its depth and tenderness, is heard in the stichera and in the canon at Matins and Compline, rising to a crescendo. And this feeling, that “the Lord is coming,” becomes completely real.

I’ll give an example that’s a little personal, but very vivid. A friend of mine, a believer, but not living a completely Churched life, was serving in the army quite a while ago. On Nativity night, he was on patrol, and suddenly at some point, absolutely without any apparent reason, he suddenly felt that ... the Lord was born. A striking, completely unexpected joy filled his heart. Evidently, some kind of mystery takes place on Nativity night—the mystery of the world remembering the most amazing moment in its history: how God became man that man might become God.

—**How can we realize the necessity of fasting for ourselves?**

—The commandment to fast is the most ancient. It was the first, given to the first-created man in Eden. And the *podvig* of fasting occupies a very prominent place in Church history. First of all, there is the memorable fast of the prophet Moses that preceded the presentation to him of the God-inscribed tablets. There's a surprising contrast: On the one hand, Moses did not eat food for forty days to receive God's covenant from Him. On the other hand, the Israelites, whom he was leading through the desert, were ready to return to Egypt, where they killed every firstborn of the Jewish families, because they didn't have as much meat, onions, and garlic as they were used to in Egypt!

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov) speaks remarkably about this: A proud man in self-delusion considers himself something significant, but as soon as his belly is constrained, it becomes obvious that he is its slave. Fasting is one of the means of freeing oneself from this bondage.

But the main thing for us here is the example of the Savior, Who, preparing for His ministry, undertook the same forty-day fast. Without needing such preparation, Himself, He showed us an image of how to prepare for important events in our lives.

—**Fasting is difficult for modern man, living not in a monastic dormitory but in the middle of the world. Fasting sometimes seems like a strange anachronism to those around us, and sometimes simply obscurantism. Are any concessions possible in this regard for someone who is fasting?**

—Certainly, fasting in the midst of the world is more difficult than in a monastery. Sometimes in families one person has come to God, while another doesn't understand and accept the Church life and its rules, and thus there is no fasting food there as such. It's also difficult when you spend the majority of your day at work, where there's no chance to get quality fasting food. But difficult doesn't mean impossible. Experience irrefutably shows that when a Christian decides to fast, he succeeds; all the obstacles are overcome.

There's one more very significant aspect of fasting for someone living in the world. In this world, unchurched, not knowing God, we very often "dissolve" and lose ourselves in its events and affairs, and it forces us to forget who we are. And in this sense, fasting is a very effective means for remembering that you are an Orthodox believer. And at the same time, it's a homily without words, because seeing someone who refuses something for the sake of God, people inevitably start respecting his faith. It often becomes an occasion for them to think and then ask about something important for themselves.

But, of course, deviations from the accepted typikon are possible if someone is sick and lacks the physical strength to keep it. Although it's best to coordinate this with your priest, asking his blessing and counsel.

You know, physically we really are much weaker than our ancestors who showed amazing examples of self-restraint, and we cannot take their measure of asceticism upon ourselves. But we are weaker than them mentally and spiritually as well. Therefore, today, a priest has to condescend not only those who are bodily ill, alleviating their restraint for them with some indulgences. The modern Church-going person may not be ready for fasting purely psychologically. The thought that we have to renounce our usual food for forty days leads him to horror. And when you see that someone is fasting not so resolutely, then, in order not to push him away entirely, you can suggest some kind of "training" fast: to give up only meat and something modest the first time out. There's hope that he will be ripe for stricter abstinence the next fast.

—**Should a believer celebrate New Years during the Fast? What should you do if this holiday is very important for your loved ones?²**

—Here we need spiritual reasoning. If you have Church people around you, it's simple: By his own will, a believer shouldn't spend all night watching TV specials or at a party or some other event. If not everyone in your family is a believer, then you have to find a good balance: not to deviate from the bodily fast, but to try to do it

as imperceptibly as possible and not indulge in excessive fun. There can be no complete compromise. Rather, we should gently and lovingly do what the law of God and the Church canons oblige us to do.

—**What else would you advise someone who's fasting to be attentive to?**

—To the fact that fasting isn't just a time of hard ascetic *podvig*, but also a time of temptations. A spiritual law is revealed: Starting to try to live in a more disciplined way, you go out to the line of battle. A time of war is coming: Those forces that oppose all goodness in our life take up arms against us. But this doesn't happen without the permission of God. As Abba Dorotheos says, every good deed is either preceded or followed by temptation.

Most often, the temptations of fasting are manifested in the exacerbation of existing conflicts or the emergence of new ones. In general, unfortunately, someone who is fasting sometimes becomes much more irritable, nervous... But knowing in advance that the Fast is a time of temptations, you can better prepare for them and endure them more placably. Prayer should be the main help in this. In general, believers usually increase their prayer rule when fasting: They read the Psalter, they do prostrations, and they try not to allow any omissions or abbreviations into their rule.

There's something else I'd like to say. People, including believers, very easily forget about their duties. We're constantly in need of incentives and reasons to be attentive to the important things we encounter in our everyday life. And the Fast is precisely that occasion, that incentive for collecting ourselves. But, unfortunately, with the end of the fast often comes a certain "backslide," and you quickly lose the little you managed to gain. It's very important to avoid this, so the Fast would be for us another, even if very small, step in our ascent to God; so we wouldn't slide down from this step.

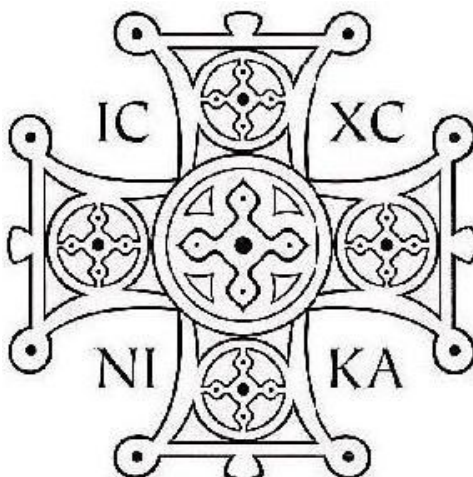
Igumen Nektary (Morozov)

Translated by Jesse Dominick

12/1/2019

1 The festive singing of Psalms 134 and 135 at Matins at more important feasts. The name "polyeleos" comes from the repetition of the phrase for His mercy endureth forever in Psalm 135.—Trans.

*2 Of course, this question directly applies to those keeping the Fast according to the Old Calendar. In Russia, where New Year's is a major holiday, having been pushed on the people as a replacement for Nativity under the Soviet oppression. It remains a beloved holiday today, although the faithful can openly celebrate Nativity. Fr. Nektary's answer could just as easily apply to Christmas parties at work or with friends that fall before the feast itself, during the Fast.—Trans. (*Originally posted at <https://orthochristian.com/126017.html>)*



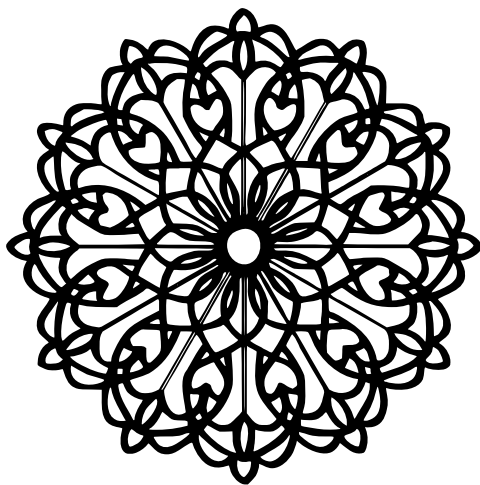
A NEW CATECHUMEN FOR HOLY TRANSFIGURATION IN MOUNTAIN HOME, ARKANSAS



James Munden, a former 101st paratrooper in the army, moved from San Antonio to Mountain Home to be with his father. He has two children and works at Lincoln Paden Medical Group. He became a catechumen at Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church on Oct 27, 2019 and we're so happy to have him with us!

James, we're happy that you've taken this first step on your way home.

May God grant you every good thing as benefits your salvation! God be praised!



The 2019 Annual ROCOR Western Rite Conference

In Words & Pictures

By Fr. Benedict Simpson+

This year's conference and retreat proved to be an astounding success on all fronts! This year saw several new things that turned out to make for a wonderful time of fellowship and a good medium for deciding the future course of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities as it continues to grow.

VENUE



Previous years saw the annual conference and retreat being held in Mount Alvernia in upstate New York. This year brought a change of venue to Sarasota Florida and the beautifully manicured grounds of the Sarasota/Bradenton Hilton. The event rooms afforded a most suitable area for the daily Liturgies and the sessions that were held throughout the week of the conference. Room rates were adjusted most generously to allow for the most clergy and laity possible to take part.



The amenities were most excellent and well-maintained and free breakfast was included for all of the guests who stayed on the grounds.

SPECIAL GUESTS



*His Eminence Metropolitan
Hilarion*

As in previous years, we were blessed with not only one hierarch of the Church, but two! His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion and His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah were with us for the whole conference and retreat. Those of you who have attended past retreats know that our hierarchs are most approachable and sincerely love sharing time with clergy and laity alike. Their continued support and belief in the Western Rite's mission and structure is evident in their active participation in the retreats and in the joy that they express when there. God bless them and grant them MANY YEARS!



*His Beatitude Metropolitan
Jonah*

Our very own Vicar General, the Very Reverend Archpriest Mark Rowe was with us and led the conference in the customary style and flare that has become his trademark. Father Mark is known widely for his ability to make these conferences and retreats successful. In the years past to the present day his guidance of the ROCOR Western Rite Communities has brought great growth and expansion while establishing a bedrock foundation for stability and viability as we move forward into the future. His tireless efforts are made known to his people through his incredible work ethic and the genuine love and concern he shows for his people.



*The Very Reverend Archpriest Mark
Rowe
Vicar General of ROCOR WR
Communities*

PRESENTATIONS

His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion delivered the opening address for the conference and retreat which included several welcome words of encouragement for the Western Rite Communities. This year we were honored to be the recipients of a wonderful group of lectures by Metropolitan Jonah on the *History of the Russian Church in North America* which were most informative and crammed with detailed information that many historians just seem to glance over.



*Metropolitan Jonah teaching of ROCOR's
history in North America*



Hieromonk Aidan Keller

Father Aidan Keller from Texas gave a most informative lecture on *Vestments of the Ancient Church in the West* which was thoroughly enjoyable and recorded for later viewing for the public.

The sessions for clergy and the open sessions were run very efficiently and the forums provided for genuine discourse on several subjects of particular concern to the Western Rite Communities going forward. These sessions were packed to the walls and were avidly participated in.

The clergy wives and women laity were able to enjoy and off-site retreat with Metropolitan Jonah to a local monastery for a tour and mini-retreat complete with a lively discussion hosted by Metropolitan Jonah.



*Women & Matushki at the Women's Retreat of
the ROCOR Western Rite Conference with
Metropolitan Jonah*



ORDINATIONS



From Left to Right: Reader Syllanos, Reader Nicholas, & Reader Jacob

His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion ordained several men to the orders of the clergy during the conference. It is always a joy to see the Church's future beginning their journey through the minor to the major orders of the clergy. God bless them and grant them many years and a rich harvest of souls!

FELLOWSHIP

As always, it was so good seeing everyone gather from as far away as Sweden and the United Kingdom to share time, swap ideas and stories, to gather about the fire to join in an exchange of ideas and friendship as only genuine brothers in Christ can do. My own experience is that this conference and retreat was a genuine time of spiritual renewal and refreshment. A time to recharge the batteries and get ideas to bring home to our own parishes and missions. I was truly blessed to be a small part and to be with these great men of God in this very beautiful setting to discuss the future and the lessons of the past. God bless us all!



ST. ANTHONY'S IN ALABAMA GETS A NEW HOME!!!



Father Richard Kalbfleisch received wonderful news just recently that his mission has been offered a home for as long as is needed! The rector of Nativity Episcopal Chapel in the historic Twickenham District has made available the church building for the use of Fr. Richard and his congregation with very generous terms! The use of the church is being provided at no charge and he will have use of the altar in with the deal!



The Twickenham Historical District was established in 1843 and is a beautiful, scenic location for the Faithful to gather together . Orthodoxy in Huntsville will be well served! Congratulations to Fr. Richard and may God bring an increase in a harvest of souls to his mission!





An Advent Meditation

By Fr. Theodore Andreivitch of St. Patrick of Ireland Orthodox Church Stanwood, WA

Welcome to the blessed days of Advent. It is no small matter for me—this wintery Lent—these weeks of solemn preparation for the greatest Good News the world would hear until the return of the King!

I loved Christmas just like any kid in my day. I loved presents and the sound of Santa’s name! However, from quite early on, when “*maturity*” was harboring disbelief, and as the other boys were abandoning Santa, I couldn’t let go. I wanted more than presents; I wanted to be a friend to St. Nicholas and to know and love the Lord Jesus.

By God’s grace, every year our church, which was nearly *high church*, decked the halls with Christmas pageantry—*very middle-ages*; giving testimony to something ancient and lasting. *Dang!* I thought. If the adults were taking this all so seriously, joyously, and reverentially (yup; all of those), then there was certainly something to it all. Because the adults treated these holy days with such care, I adopted my first great tenet for the season.

The First Tenet

This matters to the big people so much that any kid, who is tossing in the towel because of the whole Santa thing, is truly getting conned out of something even greater.

So, I became the friend of St. Nicholas and he became mine—to this very day. Through him I came to—as Dickens might phrase it: “*know Christ better, man!*” It was so mystical and delightful. Imagine my shock as a young adult when I found such hostility towards the blessed Season, right there within the church (Protestant/Evangelical). I could swing a candy-cane in any direction and take out ten Humbuggers. Humbuggers say such things as, “Well, you know the first Christmas wasn’t in December!” and “Well, you know, the first Christmas wasn’t white with snow!” The worst sentiments were of that poisonous variety that wished to make utilities out of everything—including Mother Mary, Theotokos, Ever-Virgin. *Sigh...*

When I was in seminary, I made the study of Advent, Christmastide, and Epiphany my pet project—my self-appointed sub-major. I learned truths to counter all the humbugging. I learned that the hills about Jerusalem *do* get snow from time to time! In fact, mid-last century, there were two dumpings of snow, both overnight, each dumping 1.5 ft. to 3 ft of snow. I also learned that Shepherds in the fields with their sheep didn’t in any way indicate “lambing time” and therefore Springtime. And I learned more and more of the Ancient Faith—treasures then embedded in my soul until just the right time, many years later.

This leads me to my thoughts on Advent! There is SO much on which to meditate. Some thoughts may be serious, and some might be quite playful—but all contemplations considered via delayed gratification. Embrace

the solemn preparation of the soul through fasting and prayer, until you are mystically awakened by the light of a preternatural star, guiding your heart to return to Bethlehem, to kneel down before a feeding trough—sharing tight quarters with angels and shepherds—and, of course, the Blessed Mother, Joseph her most-chaste spouse, and God the Son. If the anticipation of opening presents is nearly unbearable for a child, imagine the anticipation experienced by those of us who make the effort to “come as children (or not at all; Matthew 18:3).”

Children would not anticipate Christmas with such vigor if there were not, so to speak, a dangling carrot for their trouble. We have this invitation to enter Advent—not begrudging the fast or the solemnity of the season—but welcoming this holy prelude to all the beauty and pageantry that awaits. What a wonderful way to approach the inevitable Mass for Christ’s Nativity! May we embrace hope in the same manner as a child. God has promised His Son! Hope does not disappoint!



EXHORTATION BY ARCHBISHOP KYRILL OF SAN FRANCISCO AND WESTERN AMERICA TO BISHOP JAMES OF SONORA UPON RECEIVING THE CROZIER



Archbishop Kyrill handing over the crozier to Bishop James (Corazzo) of Sonora

Your Grace, Bishop James!

This day, through the laying on of hands, you have received the Grace of the Holy Episcopacy. You have been summoned to the highest office of Holy Mother Church.

You are now entrusted with the care to teach, to guide, and to protect spiritually priests, deacons and laity. Be the embodiment of wisdom, of humility, and obedience to Christ; for of that which you have received—this gift, which is a divine Grace of God—you shall be responsible at the Last Judgment Seat of Christ.

As a bishop you are a sower: one who sows seeds that are to fall upon unnurtured soil. The seeds you sow are Christ's teachings, His words. The earth upon which they fall is the heart of man. As a sower who prepares the earth before he plants, you as a bishop need to prepare the heart of man, in order for it to be rich, and so, when receiving this seed, gain spiritual strength.

Seek no counsel of men. Do not trust in man! When one puts dependency on man, one will fall with man; for the help you receive from men, as the Fathers teach, is even weaker than a cobweb. This is the way of the fallen world in which we live.

Saint John Chrysostom teaches that when we surround ourselves by learned men of wisdom, then eventually, if we keep what they say, we embody them and become like them. Yet still there is something higher. Through prayer, you stand next to the One Who can give you necessary strength, understanding, support—and that is Christ our God.

Envelop yourself in prayer. Stand with God. Remember - “[The Word of] God became man so that man may become God”, St Irenaeus (Against Heresies, Book 5, Preface).

Receive the crosier: a symbol of your episcopal authority; and now that you are a prince of Holy Mother Church, take it, go forth and do the Lord’s bidding.

24 Oct./6 Nov. 2019
Holy Virgin Cathedral
San Francisco

A BIOGRAPHY of His Grace Bishop James

The future Bishop James was born on December 13th, 1958, in Berkeley, California into a family of Catholics and Protestants. He was raised Lutheran. His family relocated to Oregon in 1970, where he attended high school. It was here that he became interested in oration and debate, and that is what brought him to the study of Political Science and the University of California Santa Cruz with the intention of practicing and teaching Law. He discovered the Orthodox Faith during his second year of study. Through the campus’ Orthodox Christian Fellowship he was profoundly affected by the revelation of a Christianity that was dramatically different from Protestantism. This very fellowship shaped several monastics, bishops, priests and spouses of priests. It is well-known that Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) also met with this group. Receiving the revelation of Truth, the future Bishop James decided to discard his pursuit of a career in Law and became an Orthodox Christian in January of 1980.



The nature of monasticism – “All or nothing” – was very appealing to the future Vladyka James, and a desire to become a monastic was born in him immediately. The turning point came when his spiritual father, Archimandrite Anastassy (Newcombe) told him: “You have received much. Be generous with your life.” Seeing in Father Anastassy an example for emulation, he upon conclusion of his studies in 1982, received a blessing from Bishop Basil (Rodzyanko) to enter a monastery of the Diocese of the West (OCA). In 1983, he and the brotherhood to which he belonged, was received into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by Archbishop Anthony of Western America and San Francisco. Soon after that, Vladyka James and the other members of the monastic brotherhood were sent to Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville (New York). In the Spring of 1984, he was assigned to the Old Holy Virgin Cathedral in San Francisco, which has been the place where Archbishop Tikhon (Troitsky), Saint John (Maximovich) Protopresbyter Michael Pol’skiy and other luminaries of the Russian Church Abroad had served. From that time, the “Old Cathedral” became his home.



ROCOR Bishop being consecrated

In September of 1986, he was tonsured a rasaphore monk. In 1994, he was ordained a Hierodeacon by Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov). In 2004, he was ordained a Hieromonk by Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America. In 2006, he was tonsured to the small schema, and in 2016 elevated to the rank of Abbot.

In the early years of his service at the Old Cathedral, he served as the choir conductor, and was the editor of the Orthodox journal called “Old Cathedral Quarterly Journal,.” Since 2004, has organized pastoral retreats for the clergy of the Western American Diocese and has regularly lectured at various church and academic conferences, youth conferences, summer youth camps and in parishes throughout the Diocese. While serving at the Old Cathedral over the years, he has worked to unite into one flock parishioners of diverse nationalities (Russian, Romanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Serbian, Ethiopian/Eritrean, Spanish and American). He has also focused on working with children, drawing them into active participation in church life.

In 2019, in connection with his assignment as Abbot of Saint Silouan the Athonite Monastery in Sonora, CA, he was elevated to the rank of archimandrite. Bishop James is the Diocesan Treasurer, the Dean of Monastics and the most prominent organizer of pilgrimages to the places in California that are connected with the life and struggles of the Holy Hierarch John (Maximovich).

At the Meeting of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia that took place on June 27, 2019, after performing a poll on the election of Archimandrite James (Corazza), it was resolved to consider the latter chosen as Bishop of Sonora, Second Auxiliary Bishop of the Western American Diocese. This Resolution was accepted by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate. He was consecrated to the Episcopacy on November 6th, 2019.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH BOARDS & CLERGY

The parish church is a football team, and God is the owner. The bishop is the coach on the sidelines, and the priest is the quarterback on the field. The parishioners are the players.

The priest and the parishioners huddle together in council and, under the oversight of the bishop, choose their play from the playbook, the Gospel. Then they walk up to the line of scrimmage, facing the world and all its challenges, and they execute their play. As in football, if the play is successful then the team scores, and if the team keeps scoring then it wins not only games but also championships. In the Church the same holds true. If the bishop, priest, and parishioners work well together then the team achieves salvation for all of its members, and the owner, God Himself, is pleased.

This administrative structure, common to both professional football and the local parish church, is not only extremely adaptive and preserves proper accountability but it also encourages a true sense of teamwork. A good illustration of the model's adaptability, accountability, and need for teamwork can be seen in the case of an audible.

In football, an audible occurs when circumstances require the quarterback to change the play at the line of scrimmage, after everyone has already left the huddle. When the quarterback picks a new play, based upon his training and his unique position as the only one able to survey the entire field, the team must respond accordingly otherwise the play will fail. Likewise, if the quarterback calls the wrong audible then they play will fail and he will answer to the coach. The same is true in the church.

If circumstances require the priest to call an audible, even though a decision was already made in council, then he must be ready to do this for the salvation of the people. This determination should be based upon his training as well as the unique vantage point coming from his position as the only one able to survey the entire field; knowing not only confidential matters regarding the spiritual state of the team but also, with the Lord's help, to some extent the devices and plans of the opposition. If the priest calls the wrong play or a play not in the playbook (the Gospel) then he will be accountable to his bishop.

On the football team, the players follow the quarterback, the quarterback is accountable to the coach, and the coach is responsible to the owner. In the local church, the people follow the leadership of the priest, the priest answers to his bishop, and the bishop is responsible before God for his management of the team. All personnel (bishops, clergy, and laity) are directly answerable to God for how well or how poorly they fulfill the particular duties of their assigned role. In football, teamwork leads to championships; in the Church, teamwork leads to salvation.



The reason this model was chosen in football is the same reason it was chosen in the Church – it is adaptive, preserves accountability, fosters teamwork, and quite simply, it works.

ROCOR SYNOD ELEVATES ARCHBISHOP MARK OF BERLIN TO METROPOLITAN

New York, December 11, 2019



Photo: orthodox-europe.org

His Eminence Archbishop Mark of Berlin of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has been elevated to the rank of Metropolitan in honor of his 40 years of episcopal service.

The decision to honor Metropolitan Mark, the longest serving ROCOR hierarch, was made by unanimous decision of the ROCOR Holy Synod, which met in New York from December 6 to 10, reports the [Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe](#).

The white klobuk, worn only by metropolitans in the Russian tradition, was laid upon Met. Mark, the Vice President of the Holy Synod, by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, the First Hierarch of ROCOR, following the dismissal at the Divine Liturgy on December 10, the feast of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God.



Photo: orthodox-europe.org

A decree of elevation was also read out, noting that the matter had been raised by Met. Hilarion at the previous Synodal session on June 28, at which Abp. Mark was not present.

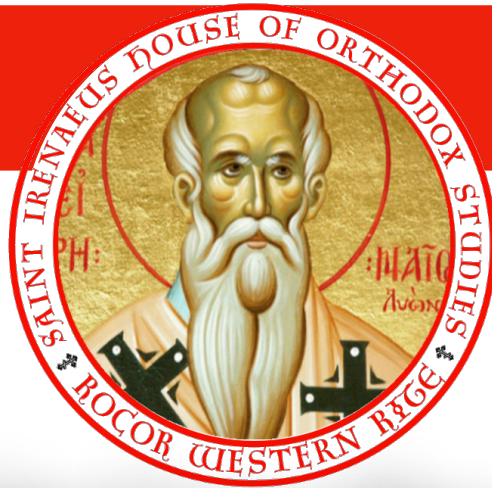
“Now, having studied the responses of the Hierarchs of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, with great joy we report to Your Eminence that your brethren archpastors, prayerfully glorifying Christ the Chief Pastor, piously venerating the miracle-working image, the Hodigitria of the Russian diaspora, boldly and with kind heart declare ‘axios’ as you are being elevated to the lofty rank of metropolitan,” the decree reads.

Metropolitan Mark was born in then-Eastern Germany in 1941 and moved to the west in 1954, settling in Frankfurt am Main. He studied Slavic Languages and completed his doctorate in Ancient Russian Literature, entering the Orthodox Church in 1964 and later enrolling in the Theological Faculty of the University of Belgrade. There he came under the influence of the renowned Serbian Orthodox Theologian, St. Justin Popovic and he decided to enter the monastic life. He was tonsured by Bishop Paul of Stuttgart in 1975 and ordained priest in 1976. Four years later Father Mark was consecrated as Vicar Bishop of Munich and Southern Germany in November 1980, and he moved the bishop’s residence to the Monastery of St. Job of Pochaev where he revived the monastery along Athonite lines. Since 1982 he has been Ruling Bishop of Berlin and Germany, and in 1990 was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. In 1997 he was appointed overseer of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, which role he still fulfills.

From 1986 to 2017 His Eminence additionally served as Ruling Hierarch of the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland. The current Diocesan Cathedral of the Nativity of the Mother of God and Holy Royal Martyrs in Chiswick, London, was constructed at Vladyka Mark’s initiative and under his careful guidance.

Metropolitan Mark is amongst the most senior hierarchs of the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church, by length of time since consecration, and is an authority on Church dogmatics, canons and liturgical life.

May God grant his newly-elevated Metropolitan Mark many years!



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BAPTISMS AT ALL SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA IN ATLANTA AND A NEW YOUTH DIRECTOR

This past September saw the joy of a whole family coming into the Church! The Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Akin along with their two children were baptized and chrismated into the Church by Father Benedict in an outdoor baptism service in Decatur, Georgia. We were joined by many of our friends from the Monastery of the Glorious Ascension in Resaca, Georgia. It was a beautiful service with a wonderful outdoor barbecue following immediately after.



INTRODUCING MRS. CATHERINE ZURMUEHL, OUR NEW YOUTH DIRECTOR



Mrs. Catherine Zurmuehl

All Saints of Atlanta welcomes their first Director of Youth Education, Mrs. Catherine Zurmuehl! Catherine is the wife of Subdeacon Joseph Zurmuehl and has really made an impact on some of All Saint's younger ones already! The joy of being able to do something that you really love shows through in everything you do. Catherine relishes what she does and it shows in the quality of the lesson plans and activities she schedules with the children.

"It's a wonderful service that she has been called to and I can't think of a better person to do it than Catherine." (*Fr. Benedict)

Our youth are the most valuable resource we have today for they are the future of the Church. Teach them well and they will do the same in good time.

Welcome Catherine! May the souls that you touch be instilled with the burning flame of the unadulterated Faith of the Apostles and Disciples of Christ!

**CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 35TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARCHPASTORAL SERVICE OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN
HILARION OF EASTERN AMERICA AND NEW YORK, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA.**



From the Editors: On Tuesday, December 10, 2019, on the feast day of the Synodal Cathedral of Our Lady “of the Sign” in New York and the 35th anniversary of the archpastoral service of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, at the end of Divine Liturgy, His Eminence Metropolitan Mark of Berlin and Germany read the following congratulatory address from the members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad.

Your Eminence:

We relay to you our heartfelt greetings to Your Eminence on the important occasion of the 35th anniversary of your accepting of the illuminated Grace of episcopal service.

“On this chosen and holy day” of yours we hasten to assure you that the fervent prayers lifted by you for the strengthening and confirmation of our service in the Church of Christ are ever dear to us, and that the episcopal

staff of your Primatial service brings us profound consolation. What can we say about your untiring preaching of the Word of God not only to emigres and their descendants, but among their local populations?

There is unlikely to be a corner in the ecclesiastical regime entrusted to Your Eminence where mouths do not utter missionary preaching, which are edifying and emboldening. In your First-Hierarchal service we sense not only authority, but first and foremost, education, that is, the nourishment of renascent souls. In your approach to people we feel not the stringency of episcopal power, but paternal love, merciful, forgiving, creative and strengthening. Here, in the words of the Apostle, you have become “all things to all people.” And this Apostolic rule you expressed and continue to express in the fullness of your labors and actions in establishing and expanding the Russian Church Abroad entrusted to you by the Chief Pastor, Christ; you display it not only in the life of the Church but in your personal life. For you, in the words of the same Apostle, “there is neither Greek... nor Scythian... but Christ is all, and in all.”

Indeed, in accordance with the inherent kindness of your heart, dear Vladyka, as a lantern of peace and love for all equally, you are understanding, attentive and exceptionally accessible; whether an Orthodox Christian or heterodox person approaches you, whether renowned or unknown, educated or ignorant, elder or child—each receives from you a word of consolation and affection. Everyone sees in you a kind, loving father-benefactor, both the clergy serving under you and laity, from small to great.

Such qualities are not innate for each person, they are inherent in rare individuals, people with a broad, warm and responsive heart, with specifically Christian upbringing, imparted into them from childhood. With these qualities, you bind people as with cement, erecting the edifice of the Church and allowing it to soar higher, shining with the blessed light of Christ’s Truth amid the darkness of our heathen, secularized world.

And so we, your collaborators in the Vineyard of Christ, wish you, our good Primate and Abbot, to continue to rightly dividing the Word of Truth with the rare youthful energy you have had until today, good health and firmness of powers with the hope that the Lord will enable you to reach other and more rare anniversaries, including the 50th anniversary of your archpastoral service. This would be the finest crown to adorn the brilliant achievements of your service to the Church of God. Amen.

Beseeching your Primatial prayers, we have the honor of assuring you of our eternal devotion and fraternal love,

+ **MARK,**

Archbishop of Berlin and Germany;

+ **KYRILL,**

Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America;

+ **GABRIEL,**

Archbishop of Montreal and Canada;

+ **PETER,**

Archbishop of Chicago and Mid-America;

+ **IRENEI,**

Bishop of London and Western Europe;

+ **GEORGE,**

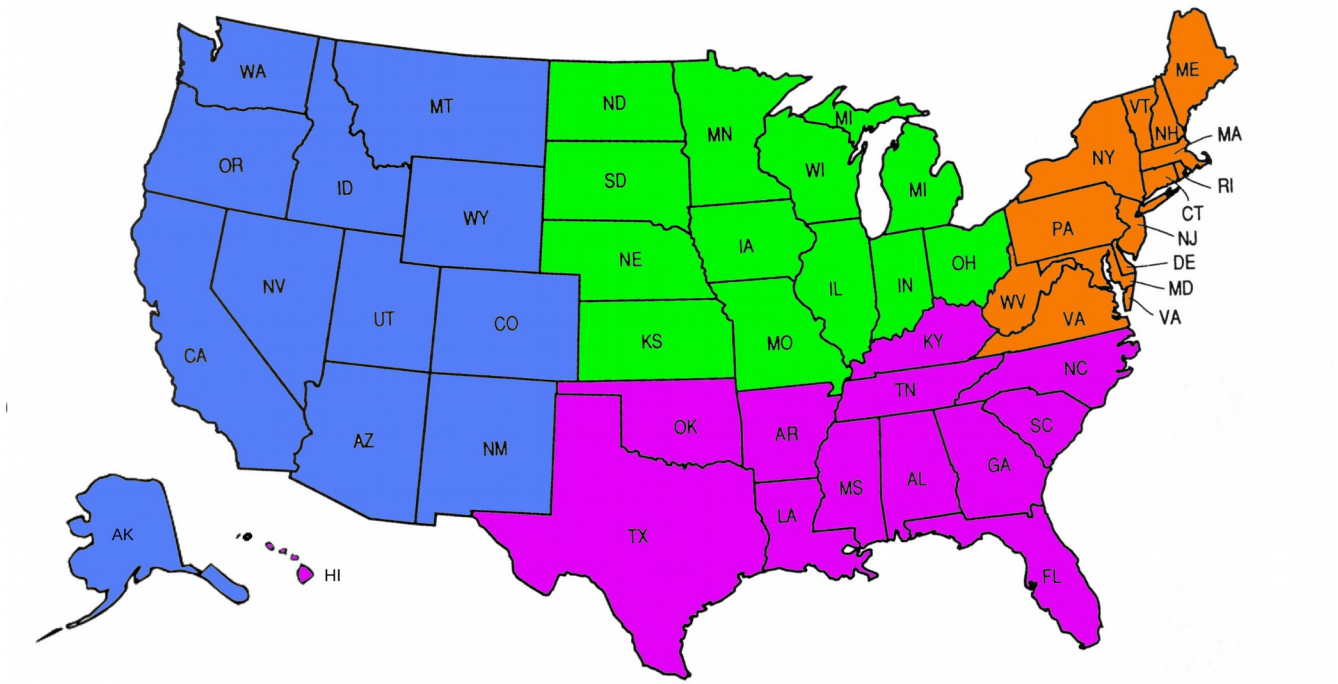
Bishop of Canberra, Vicar of the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand;

+ **NICHOLAS,**

Bishop of Manhattan, Vicar of the Eastern American Diocese.



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CONGRATULATIONS TO HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN HILARION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
35TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS EPISCOPACY
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA



MAY GOD GRANT HIM MANY YEARS!!!

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SPECIAL NOTE

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If you would like to submit your article for inclusion, please contact the editor at

fr.benedict@priest.com.

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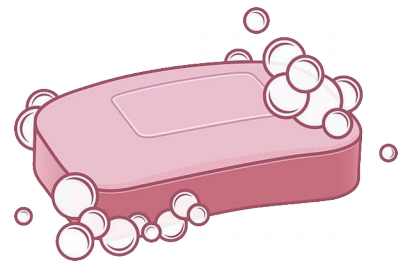


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