



Issue
#1



American Diocesan Herald

Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

<http://www.roacusa.org>

April - May 2009

With blessing of His Grace Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye

Paschal Epistle

Of His Eminence Valentine

Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir.

To the God-loving flock of the Russian Orthodox Church

Christ is risen!

Now does the Orthodox Church beam with pride and dance for joy, the Church on earth and in heaven, where death has been vanquished, for Christ is risen, and life abides for all eternity!

Mankind, in the person of its first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into the sin of disobedience to God, and thereby doomed itself to condemnation and spiritual death. As a result, not only mankind, but all of creation suffers and ails together with it, to the present day.

However, our all-merciful heavenly Father, through His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, gave us the New Testament, which revealed to mankind that God is love, and does not desire that we should perish, for He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have life everlasting. (John 3:16)

The resurrection of Christ, the Giver of life, is the guarantee of our own immortality. It is the type, or image, of the future general resurrection, the source of eternal life and victory over sin, condemnation and death. The risen Christ, Son of the living God, encompasses the entire world, since He is true God and true man.

From the risen Christ, we receive divine assistance to live out our lives in diligence and godliness. (2Peter 1:3)

We have been given the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, in which our Lord Jesus Christ unites us to Himself, reveals to us the source of that eternal and sinless life in the mansions of our heavenly Father,

where the righteous shine forth like the sun. (Matthew 13:43)

St. Gregory the Theologian, speaking about the day of Pascha, said, "Great and holy is our Pascha – the Word of God, and Light, and Life, and Wisdom, and Strength! We celebrate the very resurrection, not that which is to come, but that which has already been accomplished, and which reconciles everyone in the universe with each other."

During the days of holy Pascha, only the demons and their faithful servants fall into despondency, but we, Orthodox Christians, must rejoice with the risen Christ, despite even the fact that during this bright period of paschal joy, the representatives of our local government authority, in the persons of Mr. Poltavchenko and Mr. Gorlanov, are evicting us, Orthodox Christians, citizens of the ancient city of Suzdal, from our churches, which we restored from ruins, without giving us a single dime whereby we might erect another church to pray in.

During the 1990's, Christians from the catacombs brought to Suzdal icons and liturgical vessels that they had carefully preserved from the totalitarian Communist regime, which had once beautified our churches. Now, our communities of believers, citizens, who spared no effort or even their own health, who have resurrected Orthodoxy in our city, are being thrown out of their churches.

We have been persecuted for twenty years. We have been repressed, we have been covered with slanderous accusations for having "sold ourselves out for

American dollars,” for being agents of the CIA, for being guilty of every kind of mortal sin, we have been sued in the courts, and now they are taking our churches away. In truth, the horrible atrocities of the lawless 1930’s have come back to revisit us!

“Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” The Divine Teacher inquired of his disciples. “We are able,” the Apostles answered Him. “Ye shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with,” said our risen Christ, “and ye shall drink indeed of my cup.” To our great spiritual joy, to drink from this cup is now given to us, together with the opportunity to be baptized with the baptism of the sufferings of Christ for the Church, Which He founded. It is a great honor to become co-sufferers in the passion of Christ and in the martyrdoms of the Saints who came before us. Especially coming as they do during these upcoming days of Holy Week, when the holy Church calls upon us to follow our Lord during His last days on the earth.

Neither our Church, nor any one of us, will inscribe ourselves into the new system of the prince of this world. “If we were of this world, the world would love us,” said Christ, “Ye will weep, but the world will rejoice, but take heart – I have overcome the world.”

We will, indeed, take heart throughout all of the

difficulties foretold to us by our Lord. We will deepen our faith. We will increase our hope. And we will, indeed, rejoice that we have been given the opportunity to experience the passion of Christ through these trials and slanders. We will not permit our spiritual treasures of faith, hope, and love, to be lost in these coliseums of our day.

We will, indeed, dance for joy in the risen Christ. We will redouble our efforts in strengthening our Russian Orthodoxy, which has been revealed to us as the source of moral perfection, godliness, diligence, and has brought many faithful souls to their eternal salvation.

With a feeling of trembling love for our risen Lord, and for His much-suffering Church, we will carry the joy of our faith and love into our daily lives. We will be zealous for the glory of God, and we will flee from an attitude of indifference not only as regards our fellow man, but as regards the eternal salvation of our immortal souls, which is worth more than the entire world.

Beloved Flock in Christ of the Church of Russia! Be triumphant and rejoice, for...

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY HE IS RISEN!**

With abundant love,

Valentine

Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir,
Pascha - 2009
Suzdal

Letter of Metropolitan Chistophoros of Mesogaias and the Islands to the ROAC

HOLY MONASTERY OF PANAGIA DRENIAS
AMBELAKIA - SALAMINA

Tel: 6 - (210) 467-2921

Salamina, March 9

To His Beatitude Metropolitan Valentin and his Holy
Synod.

Your Beatitude and your Eminences, brothers
in Christ, God among us!

I've heard of the recent persecutions borne by

you, and I felt it necessary to write this letter to express my sorrow and sympathy.

In the past, we drank the same cup of sorrow, that hatred and anger of the main enemies of Orthodoxy have brought before you now, and we still drink today from this cup. Rest assured that I fully understand your situation.

Dear brothers, let me say that while these courts may hurt your heart, at the same time will benefit as they will renew and strengthen the faith in our

religious beliefs. Greatness is not found on walls and buildings, but in the Orthodox Confession of Faith, without which no one can remove your will, since they can boast in the grace of God.

A Fraternal Embrace,

+ Metropolitan Chistophoros of Mesogaias and the Islands

New Priest Ordained

On Saturday, April 25th, 2009, during the Divine Liturgy, His Grace Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye, ordained the Reverend Deacon Michael McCombs of Saint Sophia Orthodox Parish in Indiana to the Holy Priesthood. The Divine Liturgy was served at Saint Nicholas Parish in Elmwood Park, New Jersey, with His Grace Bishop Andrew Presiding and Fathers Serguei Serjanov and Michael McCombs concelebrating.

Our Church now has two priests serving at two parishes in Indiana. Let us hope our presence there, as well as in other places, will continue to grow. May God grant Father Michael many years of service to His Church!





Left to right: Fr. Michael McCombs, Bishop Andrew, Fr. Serguei Serjanov

Paschal Services in Our Parishes

Saint Peter The Aleut Orthodox Parish In Louisiana

Although the weather didn't fully cooperate, parishioners of Saint Peter the Aleut Church came to pray and share the joy of Pascha. Fr. Mark Templet led the people in procession around the chapel in the rain, but it did not dampen their spirit. The joy of the feast was continued with feasting foods and a joyous fellowship.





**Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco Parish
In Brooklyn, New York**

The services of the Holy Week passed very quietly and prayerfully. Every day was rich in services and there were always faithful praying in the church. Truly this week has beautiful and deep services and many came to take part in their soul-saving glory.

On the night of Holy Easter, the church was full from 7 p.m. with people coming to pray and bless their

Paschal baskets. At midnight, Fr. Serguei Serjanov led the parishioners in a procession after which the Easter Service began and went deep into the night. Many people came to celebrate this greatest of feasts and remained to the very end. At around 6 a.m. the joyful faithful went home.

At 1 p.m. the service of the Great Vigil was served with many parishioners attending. After the service, Fr. Serguei went to visit Bishop Andrew.





Other Events in Our Parishes

Saint Sophia Parish In Indiana

On March 26 the Parish of Saint Sophia, located in Hobart Indiana delivered the first flowers of springtime, daffodils, to Millers Merry Manor nursing home Hobart Indiana.

This is the second year that our parish has provided these flowers for the residents of Millers to enjoy. Fr. Michael McCombs and Matushka Marianne started visiting Millers in early 2007.

Each year the American cancer society sells these flowers as a fund raiser, so we at Saint Sophia are supporting two good causes at one time. The residents at Millers enjoy these flowers very much; as does the nursing staff.

This year a few days before we delivered the daffodils to Millers, one of our founding members, Gloria

Ruehman aged 72, fell asleep in the Lord.

It was such a joyful experience to visit with Gloria, we always came away feeling better, and if I did not wake her up when visiting, I was sure to hear about it on my next visit. She was confined to bed for the last five years, but this did not dampen her spirit. We will miss Gloria very much.

I have met with many interesting people at Millers, and made some good friends on the way. It might seem to the world that these people do not have any hope left, but this is not the case. When it looks like all is lost, when we are in the twilight hours of our life, when the world has lost its glimmer and glow, all is not lost. At the last hour we can approach our immortal King and God and he will welcome us as his long lost sheep back into the fold.

- Fr. Michael McCombs



Holy Protection Of The Theotokos Parish In Tennessee

Our Holy Protection of the Theotokos Parish is headed by Fr. John Mahan.

Currently, Father John is working on construc-



tion of a chapel where the services could be conducted. So far, he has constructed new altar, table of oblation and new lecterns.

Soon the chapel will be adorned by beautiful icons.

Other News Of Our Church

Suzdal Police Illegally Detain Two Clerics of the ROAC and Tried to Arrest Them on False Charges for Stealing Icons

On April 1st, at the doors of the ROAC Krestonikolsky Church, officers of the Suzdal Police Department detained two ROAC clerics - Fr. Deacon Dimitry Karpenko and Fr. Hierodeacon Benjamin (Bannin).

A reporter for Portal-Credo.ru stated that the two deacons were removing a metal chest containing vestments from the church to the Synodal Building, located 50 yards away.

The police treated the clerics quite rudely, and held them in custody for two hours on false charges of trying to steal icons from the church. Fingerprints were taken, and they started filling out reports containing absurd charges.

Upon learning that the deacons were in custody, Metropolitan Valentine, the First Hierarch of the ROAC, came to the police station. The policemen were very rude to him as well. One of the officers, who knows the Metropolitan personally, began accusing him of "bestowing a hierarchal rank upon himself." Nonetheless, the First-Hierarch managed to have the clerics released.

Representatives of the Holy Synod of the ROAC believe this incident to be connected with the confiscation of 13 churches in Suzdal from their

"alternative Church," which has been scheduled for mid-April. Among those scheduled for "return to government oversight" is the above-mentioned Krestonikolsky Church, which had restored by the ROAC and consecrated back in 1992 by the then Bishop Valentine. Representatives of the local Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate had appealed to the local police with an unofficial demand to "not allow anything of value, including religious/liturgical objects to be taken out of the churches that have been scheduled for return."

On April 1st, 2009, the ROAC Synod was visited by a representative from the US ambassador to Russia, John Beyrle, who is concerned by the unprecedented persecution of Orthodox Christians who do not recognize the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate in contemporary Russia.

Translated from an article on portal-credo.ru (<http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=69678&topic=574>)

Remarks:

Deacon Dimitriy Karpenko visited our Diocese with Metropolitan Valentine and Archbishop Theodore during the summer of 2008.

Statement

Statement of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

We – the Bishops, clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, feel compelled to call as much attention as possible to the following statement.

At the present time, the enemies of Orthodoxy – the Moscow Patriarchate, together with its subservient bureaucrats in the Russian Government – are doing everything possible to completely destroy the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

This persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church has been going on since the very beginning of our open existence.

During the 1990's, across Russia, the authorities sought to physically repress any attempt of the faithful who had freed themselves from the pro-Communist and Sergianist Moscow Patriarchate to obtain for their religious needs even a small number of the buildings that had historically been Orthodox churches and had survived the Communist period, in the sole place in Russia where the Russian Orthodox Church was able to organize itself in freedom from lies, betrayals, and heresy – the small city of Suzdal. These authorities illegally took churches away from us, refused to allow us to incorporate our dioceses and parishes, beat our clergy and parishioners up, and slandered us in the press and over the airwaves.

Then, an attempt was made to destroy our Church morally, by slandering and trying our First Hierarchy in court. Since there was nothing with which to accuse us, they began to broadcast lies and slander through the mass media to make people who would believe such accusations turn away from our Church. This attempt had some partial success, but our Church remained.

Now, the Vladimir Office of Rossimushchestvo (Russian Federal Property Office), and those who stand behind it, have decided to use the courts to take our churches in Suzdal away from us, in order to deprive us of the possibility of preaching and holding Divine Services in public.

At one time, in the beginning of the 1990's, when the Communist Party and its stranglehold on power in our country came to an end, the churches began to be returned to people of faith – those who had survived the Soviet meat-grinder; the descendants of those who had built these churches, in the first place. We received all of these churches in accordance with

the law, and most of them were in deplorable condition when we received them. And now, after our parishioners have invested so much of their time and money into bringing them into proper shape and embellishing them, the bureaucrats have decided to sue them away from us so that they can give them to the Moscow Patriarchate and use them for their own common purposes.

Our communities of faithful believers are the only lawful proprietors of these buildings, to whom the government had simply returned that which had previously been taken away from them by force – their own inheritance that had been stolen away from them by the Bolsheviks. The faithful were the ones who received them back, they are the ones who restored them, they are the ones who preserved them for the government, and they are the ones who use these churches and maintain them in proper manner. These facts should have been the deciding factor in the courts of the legality of our using these churches. But instead of handing down a fair decision and leaving these churches with the faithful, the courts trampled upon their civil rights, as well as their religious sensibilities, and the Constitution of their own government. Could this happen anywhere else in the world but in Russia?

What this means is that the time has not come to an end in Russia when the authorities, like thieves, acting in opposition to their own people, can appropriate for themselves all of the Orthodox churches they want, deciding the fate of our holy things in accordance with their own whims, can make a mockery out of the religious feelings of people of faith, and dispose of anyone that they don't happen to like. Now, we are witnesses to a repetition of the past. The tyranny of the bureaucrats continues on who, in the name of government, lord it over the people, and decide the fate of the inheritance that the nation has received from its ancestors. Instead of preserving the nation, instead of preserving our Faith, instead of preserving the government, instead of safeguarding the people, the authorities, in order to please the modern-day Pharisees of the "official church," exile Orthodox Christians who are guilty of doing nothing wrong, and annihilate the last shreds of religious liberty.

However, their war is not with us. Their war is with Almighty God, Who will quickly repay His enemies for their evil deeds.

Together with the Prophet and King David, our response is, “Our God is refuge and strength, a helper in afflictions which mightily befall us” (Psalm 45:1). Let our oppressors prosper in their luxuries and power. Let them rejoice in their high-sounding titles. Let them “devour widows’ houses” (Matt. 23:14), let them amass their comforts in the bosom of the bureaucracy. We, however, will follow the path of the New Martyrs of Russia – the straight and narrow path of Christ.

We know that very soon, in the churches that belong to us, we shall see the bailiffs of the courts and the militia (OMON), which will beat us up and chase our clergy and people out of their churches. In a word, we shall see the repetition of the same things that took place in our unfortunate country during the horrendous years of the 1920’s and the 1930’s.

In conclusion, we wish to say, not to the dis-

trict attorneys and judges, but to those people who are standing in the wings behind them and directing this repression against us: We understand that you do not believe in God, but why do you have no fear of bringing yet more shame upon your country?

President of the Synod of Bishops Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir.

Members of the Synod of Bishops:

Archbishop Theodore,

Archbishop Seraphim,

Archbishop Viktor,

Archbishop Hilarion,

Bishop Timothy,

Bishop Irinarkh,

Bishop Andrew,

Bishop Yakov.



Parish Directory

NEW JERSEY

SAINT NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER ORTHODOX PARISH

<http://www.ROACusa.org/SaintNicholas>

- **The Right Reverend Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye, Administrator of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America**
- The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Vladimir Shishkoff (retired)
- The Reverend Deacon Christopher Banks

95 Elm Street
Elmwood Park, New Jersey
07407-1610 U.S.A.

Services in Slavonic

Phone: (347) 321-4870

Fax: (208) 730-7551

Email: BishopAndrei@ROACusa.org

NEW YORK

SAINT JOHN OF SHANGHAI & SAN FRANCISCO PARISH

<http://rusvera.com>

- **The Reverend Father Serguei Serjanov**
- Reader Dimitri Serjanov

1722 73rd Street
Apt 4B
Brooklyn, NY 11204
U.S.A.

Services in Slavonic

Phone: (718)-331-5797

Email: PriestSerguei@ROACusa.org

INDIANA

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR ORTHODOX PARISH

<http://christthesaviorfortwayne.com>

- **The Reverend Father Isaac Henke**
- Subdeacon Benjamin Visocky
- Reader Matthew Brown

2624 Lavender Drive
Fort Wayne, Indiana
46818-9593 U.S.A.

Services in English

Phone: (260) 489-9393

Fax: (260) 489-9494

Email: [PriestIsaac@ROACusa.org](mailto: PriestIsaac@ROACusa.org)

SAINT SOPHIA ORTHODOX PARISH

- **The Reverend Father Michael McCombs**

4526 16th Street
Hobart, Indiana
46342 U.S.A.

Services in English

Phone: 219-384-7865

Email: [PriestMichael@roacusa.org](mailto: PriestMichael@roacusa.org)

LOUISIANA

SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX PARISH

<http://www.roacusa.org/SaintPeter/htdocs>

- **The Reverend Father Mark Templet**

22040 12th Street
Abita Springs, LA 70420
U.S.A.

Services in English

Phone: (985) 373-5257

Email: [PriestMark@ROACusa.org](mailto: PriestMark@ROACusa.org)

VIRGINIA

SAINT ANDREW THE FIRST CALLED ORTHODOX PARISH

- **The Very Reverend Archpriest Fotios Roseboro**

6941 Runnymede Trail
Fredericksburg, Virginia
22407-6248 U.S.A.

Services in English

Phone: (540) 786-2689

Email: [ArchpriestFotios@ROACusa.org](mailto: ArchpriestFotios@ROACusa.org)

TENNESSEE

HOLY PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS ORTHODOX PARISH

- **The Reverend John Mahan**

1745 Heritage Glen Dr.
Madison, TN
37115 U.S.A.

Services in English

Phone: 615-336-8020

Email: [PriestJohn@ROACusa.org](mailto: PriestJohn@ROACusa.org)

© American Diocesan Herald.

American Diocesan Herald is the official online newsletter publication of the American Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. Reproduction of materials herein is allowed, providing the American Diocesan Herald is cited as the source.

If you wish to send materials to be included in the following issues, please email them to:

[BishopAndrei@ROACusa.org](mailto: BishopAndrei@ROACusa.org)