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# THE ALEUTIAN

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Volume 2, Issue 1

Saint Peter the Aleut Orthodox Church, Louisiana USA

March 2010

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## UPCOMING POINTS OF INTEREST

- ❖ *The Abita Springs Garage Sale, March 27*  
*DONATE THINGS TO SELL FOR THE FUNDRAISER*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ *We want to form a Brotherhood and Sisterhood in the parish (details inside).*
- ❖ *Fr. Mark still needs help on the website redesign, if you know how to help or know someone who can donate their time and expertise talk to Father.*

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## When Receiving Communion (Part 2)

*By Father Mark Temple*

Like all life, we must eat to live; this is true physically as well as spiritually. It is one thing to refrain from Holy Communion because a person has not made the proper preparations or they have unconfessed grave sin, but it is wholly different to overlook the importance of the Holy Communion in making them a healthy Christian. It cannot be overstressed that Holy Communion is not about our individuality, rather it is about “the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21).

This dread and powerful Holy Mystery is here for us to receive and to be received into one common

union—Communion. There is no such thing as joining ourselves to God “too often”.

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***“The essence of our Preparations for receiving Holy Communion is to empty ourselves in order that we might be filled with Our Lord, Jesus Christ.”***

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However, the Chalice is not something that one should approach with light regard or lacking preparation. This too is dangerous, like those who starve themselves from this great spiritual food, those who eat and drink with no serious self-examination are running an even higher risk of personal damage; those who receive communion because they see it as a ritualized part of the social group to which they belong are grievously ignorant of the true nature of the Holy Mysteries. This should be evident by the fact that our bishop has commanded that we confess our sins prior to receiving communion. This is part of the priestly responsibilities as I previously mentioned. It is critical that a person empties themselves of pride prior to coming forward, otherwise how can they become one with others in common union? The essence of our preparations for receiving Holy Communion is to empty ourselves in order that we might be filled with Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All of this means that when we come to the Church, the Body of Christ, we do so in a spirit of *submissiveness*. We lay aside our opinions and preferences and accept the established discipline of the Church. In this vein, here are some times during which you should refrain from Holy Communion according to the traditions of the Church:

- Anytime that you have not gone to confession within the past week.

- If you have any grave sin that you are habitually continuing to commit.
- If you have had anything to eat since midnight the evening prior to the Divine Liturgy.
- Anytime you are actively bleeding from wounds, or in the case of women, when you are menstruating.
- If you have had sex the evening before the Divine Liturgy.
- If you haven't said a prayer all week long and made no effort to get prepared for the service.

It is also important to understand the externals of what we do when we come to communion. When I was a kid, we wore our best clothes to church; we even called them our "Sunday best". Today there tends to be in our culture a much greater sense of informality than prior generations. I have even heard people who call themselves Christians saying something like: "Why would God care what I wear to church, that's not what's important." Even if God's doesn't care, why wouldn't *you* care? We'll dress up to get married, graduate, go on a job interview, go to the prom, etc. but we just can't see why we need to make such an effort when we are about to come into the presence of the very Body and Blood of the Lord, Savior, Creator, and Ultimate Power of the universe? The Holy Trinity just doesn't rate our finest attire? I am not saying that everyone should be wearing ball-gowns or top-hat and tails, rather my point is to examine why you would feel no motivation to wear anything nicer than your yard-working clothes. The point is not about how you think God feels about what you have on; rather the point is how you decide to view the importance of coming into the presence of the Living God. It is a very slippery slope that we can find ourselves on when we begin to ignore the external features of our faith and see them as unimportant. We must remember that in Orthodoxy the content of the faith is in the form.

So what exactly are the requirements that we should strive to meet?

### Men:

- Are your clothes appropriate?
- Make sure you don't look like you just got done sleeping in your church clothes for a

week. There's a thing called an "iron," use it.

- Keep the aftershave and cologne to a minimum (if at all), we come to church to smell incense not Calvin Klein.



### Women:

- Wear a head covering. We are told to do so by the Apostle Paul, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head" (1 Cor. 11:2,5). Let me stress here: this is not a shame thing. This is the ancient custom of the Church and if you are wishing to be submissive to the Church and receive communion, then follow her traditions. You must remember, we are Orthodox and this is what we do!
- Wear a dress that goes down over your knees. You may think that this sounds old fashion and passé—it is, so what. Does it matter in the grand scheme of things whether you have pants on or a dress? What you *should* be thinking is, "If I wear a dress, no one is scandalized and I have made myself obedient to the wishes of the Church." Besides, as stated above, you wouldn't dream of getting married or going the prom in pants and those occasions are nothing compared to what you are doing by approaching the chalice.
- Keep the makeup and perfume to a minimum. As instructed to the men, we come to church to smell incense, please don't compete. Additionally there is nothing worse than to approach an icon to venerate it and see evidence of a big lip-stick kiss on it. Your beauty may be great, but that is not what church is about.

*To be continued...*

# Parish Sisterhood and Brotherhood.

## SISTERHOOD

The sisterhood comprises an integral part of parish life and growth. Comprised of the ladies of the parish, the sisterhood as a whole carries out ministry to all in the church with distinctiveness in the area of nurturing. Specifically, the sisterhood is responsible for:

- Maintenance of the Church building, both during the divine services and apart from them; care for the vestry; and the adornment of the church.
- Visitation of the sick and dying (and keeping the clergy informed of such); offering moral support for parishioners and family.
- Concern for the unbaptized and the unwed; bringing them to the church, that the Holy Mysteries may be performed over them.
- To aid, with all the means at their disposal, education for children within the parish.
- To ensure that the church is supplied with *prospora*.
- Governance of the food and beverage needs of the parish after services. And overall hospitality to guests/visitors
- Fundraising.

## BROTHERHOOD

The brotherhood of the parish exists to provide necessary ministries that utilize the talents of the men of the parish. Generally, the brotherhood is tasked with ministering to people both within the parish as well as those who are outside the membership. Specifically, the brotherhood is responsible for:

- Maintenance of the exterior of the Church building and grounds.
- To ensure the orderly conduct of those that come to the church services.
- Charitable assistance to parishioners and the needy (e.g., fixing a leaking faucet, repairing a roof, helping with bills, etc.).

- Organization of efforts aimed at increasing public awareness of the parish.
- Concern for the unbaptized and the unwed; bringing them to the church, that the Holy Mysteries may be performed over them.
- Fundraising.

## GOVERNANCE

Both the Sisterhood and Brotherhood operate with the permission and blessings of the parish rector; however both groups shall yearly elect a member as their chairperson (Senior Sister & Senior Brother). This member will preside over the meetings and report back the activities of the group to the parish rector. For the founding of the groups, the rector will appoint the first chairs for each group.

The following should be discussed at the initial meeting of each group:

- A patron saint (or feast) for the group.
- A meeting schedule (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month).
- Determine a weekly schedule of tasks to be completed; develop a rotating schedule for members to complete the tasks.
- Develop an agenda for the next meeting.



It is very important for the Brotherhood and Sisterhood to support one another's goals and activities. These groups are not in rivalry to each other, on the contrary they are being set up to meet people's needs.

# Interview with Bishop Irinarch of Tula and Briansk

Reprinted from *Vertograd* (2005)



*Vertograd:* Vladyka, it has now been over a year since you were consecrated a bishop. Do you find it difficult being a bishop?

**Bp. Irinarch:** Following the will of God is always easier than opposing it. All I ever wanted was to be a simple clergyman in Suzdal. But man proposes and God disposes.

*Vertograd:* Please tell us something about your diocese of Tula and Briansk.

**Bp. Irinarch:** In my diocese, almost all of the parishes are catacomb parishes.

*Vertograd:* Yes, the Tula region became the center of the catacomb movement even before the declaration of Sergius. The faithful began going over to illegal status when the main positions of the Tula diocese had been taken over by the Renovationists. It is said that in the archives of the UKGB, there is a lot of information about the destruction of catacomb monasteries in the 1930's

**Bp. Irinarch:** In 1943, by a direct order of Stalin, several hundred catacomb Christians were deported from the Tula and Ryazan regions to Siberia. Many of them perished, but, thank God, not all of them. In the Tula region, they have survived to the present day. The Lord has entrusted them to me, and with God's help, I look after them.

*Vertograd:* Do you have a catacomb monastery in the Tula region?

**Bp. Irinarch:** Yes.

*Vertograd:* How about the Briansk region?

**Bp. Irinarch:** Before the war, in the Briansk region, only a few catacomb priests survived. But after this region had been captured by the Germans, several hundred churches were reopened in which the bishop who was commemorated as First Hierarch was not Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), but Metropolitan Anastasy, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. In the Briansk region, the catacomb Christians were looked after by Bishop Stephen (Sevbo). When the Red Army overran the area, Bishop Stephen, together with many of the clergy and faithful, emigrated to Belorussia, and after that, to Germany. Vladyka Stephen later administered the diocese of Vienna for the ROCOR, and died in 1965.

*Vertograd:* Do you have any parishes that are not catacomb parishes?

**Bp. Irinarch:** We used to have three such parishes. Two of them, which had been under an enormous onslaught by the Moscow Patriarchate for many years, were forcibly torn away from us. At the present time, only one remains, and even that one has been the subject of many law suits and threats from the clergy of the MP for many years now.

*Vertograd:* Vladyka, what would you like to say to the readers of our magazine?

**Bp. Irinarch:** To continuously offer up your fervent prayers, not only during these days of Great Lent, but throughout your lives, calling to mind the words of St. Paul, "See then that ye walk circumspectly." May God bless all of the readers of your soul-benefiting magazine, and may God help all of the staff of *Vertograd* to continue to fight the good fight in this important and soul-saving endeavor, overcoming the wiles of the Enemy of our salvation, which come to us by way of his loyal servants.