The most recent Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia took place in Odessa, Ukraine from April 13/26 to 15/28, 2010.

The most recent session of the ROCOR Bishop Council took place in Odessa, Ukraine from April 13/26 to 15/28, 2010. On April 28, the meeting of the Holy Synod of the ROCOR was held at the same location. The ROCOR Bishop Council Epistle is published by our edition (p. 2) and all the materials, including Report of the Metropolitan Agafangel and Minutes, are posted by the website of the ROCOR Holy Synod: www.ruschurchabroad.org.
“The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.”  
(Mark 1:15)

**ROCOR Bishops Council Epistle**

The Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad greets its faithful members in these joyous days with the Paschal salutation:

**Christ Is Risen!**

In many ways, the future of our Church depends on each of its members. The faithful of the Church must understand that the Christian way of life is yet another embodiment of the sermon of the Gospel. The entire way of the Church is the way of unity in Christ. As an example of such unity, the past of the Russian Church Abroad is with us to this day, and since it is a Holy Legacy, we desire to remain faithful to it. We bear in mind the admonitions of the Saint Patriarch Tikhon and all our First Hierarchs – Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy, Philaret, and Vitaliy – and we stand firm in that immaculate Orthodox confession, to which the entire Orthodox Church has held throughout the years. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8).

In the manner of our Lord, we have strived to unite everyone and offered an invitation to members of the divided ROCA to begin a dialogue, but unfortunately our voice has not been heard by many to this day. Nevertheless, we do not cease to hope that the flock which finds itself in disunity will respond one day to our call to gather our Church together.

In these sorrowful days, the actions of many of those who call themselves Orthodox attest to their loss of the spirit of Christ. Having conducted and justified praying together with heretics and entering into arrangements with the mighty of this world for the sake of their material well-being, they have lost the very ability to distinguish good and evil. Still we call upon our flock to not become bitter and continue to entreat God to turn the hearts of those who recently were our brothers and who are now our persecutors.

In light of the new wave of harassment which Christians are experiencing from the governments of the lands they find themselves in (we are experiencing this in Argentina), as well as from the Moscow Patriarchate, we call upon all of you, dear fathers, brothers and sisters to stand firm in the Truth. Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword will keep you from Christ’s love! (Romans 8:35) God will give those who Love Him the strength to overcome all tribulations!

May the words of the Victor over this world console us in these days and for all time: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

+Metropolitan Agafangel  
+Archbishop Andronik  
+Archbishop Sofroniy  
+Archbishop Ioann  
+Bishop Georgiy  
+Bishop Afanasy  
+Bishop Gregory  
+Bishop Kirill  
+Bishop Dionisiy

Odessa, 2010
APPEAL TO THE ROCOR FAITHFUL

“...faith without works is dead” (James 2,20)

Dear brothers and sisters!

With the blessings of the First Hierarch Metropolitan Agafangel and based on a heritage and solid foundation of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, we appeal to you in order to establish a new ROCOR parish in California. To achieve our goal, we need a monetary assistance and more importantly - a spiritual rebirth. We rely on the All-Merciful God and your generosity. To start anew, we must rent or purchase a suitable building and acquire all that is necessary to hold Church services. We rely on all generous souls who will respond to the call and especially those who remember our previous benevolent traditions.

With love in Christ,

Very Rev. Wsowolod Dutikow

ST. NICHOLAS CONVENT

9/22 May 2010
Relics Translation of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra, Defender of Orthodoxy, Wonderworker, Holy Hierarch

INTERVIEW
WITH
MOTHER AGAPIA
STEPHANOPOULOS, SUPERIOR

www.stnicholasconvent.org

ST. NICHOLAS CONVENT
24 Tynan Rd.
Cleveland, NY 13042-2146

Questions:

Question 1: It has been less than a year since the appeal was published to establish the St. Nicholas Convent. What were some of the milestones from that period of time?

Question 2: During the most recent meeting in Odessa, Ukraine, the ROCOR Synod of Bishops has decided to collect and preserve the archives of our Church. What can your convent contribute to this task?

Question 3: It is evident that all your previous experience has prepared you for the multiple duties and responsibilities to become Mother Superior of the new convent. Please tell us about your spiritual path of life.

Question 4: A week from now, the Church will celebrate the Translation of the Relics of Saint Nicholas (1087). How is the Convent preparing to celebrate its Feast Day?
St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco

On June 19 / July 2, 2010, the Orthodox Church commemorates St. John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco, the Wonderworker

EXCERPT FROM A SERMON
BY ST. JOHN OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house…”

Church is a sanctified place, Holy, where the Grace of God is eternally present.

Building a church is an offering to God, choosing a parcel of ground for Church services, donating to God one’s own riches, but most importantly offering Him one’s own love and diligence. Churches were erected in different circumstances; during joyous or sad events, becoming like a beacon, from all the people on the face of their beloved land.

Churches are needed not for God, Whose throne is the sky and below Him the earth, but for us. Our donations and offerings to Churches are likewise beneficial to us, but the Lord accepts not so much the material gift, as our zeal. Christ approved the poor widow’s two mites and said that she hath cast more into the treasury than anyone, though the rich cast in much of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12:43-44). Our offerings made in name of God are accepted by God Himself. Spiritually, our offerings become Heavenly treasures, where no one can take them away, but if anyone dares to take Church property, then he steals from God Himself and will be punished by God Himself.

Thus acted devout Russian people, giving their few pennies to grey-haired wanderers who collected donations for Churches.

At every church service the builders of Churches are commemorated.

Building churches here on earth, we are erecting for ourselves eternal abodes in Heaven. Decades will pass, our bodies will decompose and maybe even nothing will be left of our bones; but our souls will live forever. Blessed is he who prepared an abode for his soul in Heavenly Mansions. Even if the erected churches are destroyed, the name of their benefactors will be recorded in God’s eternal books where the resounding prayers will be indelibly imprinted.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. ...I am with you saith the LORD. (Haggai 1:7-8, 13)

St. John (Maximovich) and Blessed Father Justin (Popovich)

Photograph: St. John (Maximovich) and Blessed Father Justin Popovich among students in Serbia during the 1920s
Blessed Father Justin Popovich

Archimandrite Justin Popovich, a spiritual father of the Chelije Monastery near Valjevo of blessed memory (1894-1979), hereafter known as our Venerable Father Justin of Chelije, was formally glorified as Saint by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church on May 2, 2010 (the liturgical commemoration is on June 1/14th each year.)

Church Divine Services and Feasts

The entire life of the Church is an uninterrupted service to God, therefore every day in the Church is a feast, because every day there is a Divine Service and a remembrance of the Holy Saints. This is why the life in the Church is an uninterrupted Divine Service and a life with all "the Holy Saints" (Ephesians 3:18). The Saints of today’s date advance us to the Saints of tomorrow’s date - tomorrow’s Saints - to the next day and on to the end of the year eternally. Celebrating the remembrance of the Holy Saints, we prayerfully and in reality experience their grace and holy virtues to the extent (ability) of our faith, for the Holy Saints are the essence of the personification and embodiment of the Holy Gospel’s virtues and the immortal dogmas of our Salvation.

Eternal Truths of the holy virtues are actualized in our life first of all and moreover with prayer and Divine Service. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (John 6:63) The Divine Service grants us Grace to the extent of our freedom; united grace and our freedom bring to life dogmatic and ethical Gospel truths. “Church as the body of Christ” totally participates through Eucharistic Body, which is sacred above all that is sacred, in our earthly world. Everyone in the Holy Body of the Church, always labors jointly “with all the saints”, and we through the Most Holy Mother of God and all the saints give ourselves and each other and our entire life to Christ God. Here all is God-man like, all unites God with man, heaven with earth, eternity with the temporal; all earthly lives with heaven, all temporal - eternal, the entire man lives by God. Thus occurs an uninterrupted God-man’s ‘podvig” holy fit of salvation, Godliness, unification with Christ, because the Church is heaven on earth, God in man, and man in God.

From the book “Orthodox Church and Ecumenism”

by Blessed Father Justin Popovich of Chelije, (1894 - 1979)

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thessalonians, 5:16–18)
Monastery, as the Soul of the Church

Interview with Mother Agapia Stephanopoulos, Superior at the Convent of Saint Nicholas, the Wonderworker, of the Syracuse Diocese, ROCOR
(Questions are on page 3)

THE MILESTONES

The first thing that struck me was the overwhelming response from clergy and laity throughout the US and even in Australia to our appeal. It was obvious that the call for a convent, a spiritual center for the ROCA under Metropolitan Agafangel was important to many people both young and old. The letters received from elderly people expressing their deep appreciation for the formation of a Convent were very moving. At the same time it was wonderful to meet young people excited about the idea of coming to visit the Convent. After the ruinous and sometimes bitter separation from friends and family because of the 2007 union between ROCOR and the MP people are deeply in need of a place where they can once again focus on their spiritual life and rebuild their communities in a positive and healthy way. The Convent can help provide direction and inspiration.

Finally buying and moving into a new property in early February was an important step but what I find to be even more significant was the joy of having services and celebrating our first Liturgy at the end of the first week of Great Lent. This above all else is the reason for our existence here at St. Nicholas. To struggle and purify our own souls within a daily prayer cycle and to offer prayers on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ scattered throughout the world.

ROCOR ARCHIVES

Some of my most profound experiences as an Orthodox Christian took place at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville which in many ways exemplified the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Sadly with the union between ROCOR and the MP much of the history of the ROCOR is being distorted to fit a particular agenda.

It is important that we do what we can to collect and archive ROCOR materials (journals, magazines, books, photos, memoirs) in order to present and remind people what those luminaries in Jordanville (Archbishop Averky, Archbishop Vitaly, Fr. Konstantin Zaitsev, Fr. Michael Pomazansky, Ivan Andreyev, etc) said and wrote. Their unvarnished legacy is one that is most important for coming to a real understanding of Orthodoxy and its significance for today’s world. With Metropolitan Agafangel’s blessing we plan to build a library here on the Convent grounds first to collect in one place as many of these materials as we can and then to catalog and present them in such a way that the library can become a real learning center. Already faithful have begun to send such books and magazines to the Convent and we have begun to sort and catalog them in our residence. It is hoped within a year construction of a separate library can begin.

SPIRITUAL PATH

First, be thought of as a superior of a convent is a misnomer. The fact is that the events in 2007 caused disruption in the life of many: clergy, laity and monastics. Now we begin to pick up the pieces and just as Archimandrites Panteleimon and Joseph did in 1927 when they left St. Tikhon’s Monastery for conscience’s sake and purchased the property in Jordanville so too do we do today. I am simply a nun trying to be true to our faith.

While I was raised in the New Calendar Greek Archdiocese in my college years I had the opportunity to visit Jordanville, and in fact remember meeting Fr. Panteleimon who was in the last year of his life. The experience was overwhelming to me for it was the first time I had really seen monks, the full order of services, and a hint of what the Orthodox faith was really all about in its fullness. I visited Jordanville frequently off and on for about 4 years before a women’s monastic community was formed. In December 1991, I was made a novice in the Community of St. Elizabeth and lived there for five years. Besides obediences such as making incense and candles, one of my chief obediences was assisting the Monastery’s printshop and it was here in the typesetting and preparation of the Monastery’s publications that I learned and absorbed much of the history of the ROCOR. Having this knowledge and experience is certainly one reason why I am so committed to the path of Metropolitan Agafangel’s Synod.

I then spent 10 years in Jerusalem at the Convent of St. Mary Magdalene. There was a wonderful young abbess there at the time (Abess Anna Karipoff) who did much to instill a coenobitic order and inspire the nuns to a deeper spiritual life. Here in a much larger community of 25-30 nuns I was relieved of having to do so much physical labor that a smaller community
might entail and aided by good examples and the inspiration of living and often visiting the Holy Sites, I was able to focus more on my interior spiritual life. This sweet period was only to last about a year and a half. Soon the events in Hebron happened (MP seizure of our monastery in 1997) and I was called to assist with administrative matters. As well the upheaval and strain caused by this seizure led to Mother Anna resigning her position and leaving the Convent. This led to other changes in the monastery and I was appointed to run the Convent’s Orthodox School of Bethany.

The experience of running a school for 325 children, caring for 12 girls from broken homes, managing the property, dealing with teachers and employees, and at the same time trying to live the life of a nun in the Holy Land, going to services and hosting pilgrims, all in a most politicized and sometime violent part of the world certainly honed skills that are most useful as we undertake the formation of a new convent here in the States. Quite frankly while there are challenges here, it somehow seems a lighter burden than those days in Jerusalem.

Finally in February 2006 essentially due to my known opposition to the coming union I moved to Australia for two years to a small skete in the outback that Abbess Anna had established. With 6 people living on 200 acres and the nearest town about 60 miles away it was as far from the tension and hustle and bustle of Jerusalem, the center of the world, that one could imagine. But it was just what my soul needed. It was refreshing to be in the quiet once again, free of distraction and able to concentrate on the inner life. Sadly Mother Anna’s community went with the union but accepted and understood my decision. So I returned to the States, my homeland, not knowing exactly what would happen.

Looking back yes it does seem that all my experiences have prepared me for this moment. Our property is rather isolated and quiet and I find this to be the perfect place for working out a life of prayer and repentance. At the same time the place was not ready made and many organizational and administrative matters, dealing with municipalities and money matters need to be dealt with and my work at the School certainly helps in this regard.

The First Feast Day

While in someways it is premature because we are still very much in the beginning stages, still unpacking boxes, renovating rooms 3 months after we moved in, we will open our doors for the celebration of our patronal feast day. Our Convent is dedicated to St. Nicholas, and given the weather conditions here, it was decided the feast of the Translation of his relics (May 9/22) would be more appropriate for a pilgrimage. Because the feast fell the day before Pentecost we transferred the celebration to the weekend following Pentecost this year. We expect about 50 - 75 pilgrims to join us primarily from Astoria, from our communities in Toronto and Ottawa, as well as locals.

There will be a Vigil service on Saturday evening May 29 led by Archbishop Andronik and a hierarchal Liturgy the following morning. May St. Nicholas ever guide and protect us in our small efforts to provide a place of prayer for our ROCA faithful and a witness to the Orthodox faith to those outside the fold.

Holy Father Nicholas, pray to God for us!

May 15, 2010

Photographs: Bethany near Jerusalem, the Holy Land.
Left: Chapel at the school's courtyard.
Right: Mother Agapia and students of the Orthodox School during the Divine liturgy, Lazarus Saturday, Pascha-2005
Feast Day in Oxnard, California

On Pentacost, 2010, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos and His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, as well as Archimandrite Akakios and Hierodeacon Nectarios, all from the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, CA, visited the Holy Trinity Church in Oxnard, CA, where they celebrated the parish Feast Day Liturgy with its Rector, Protopresbyter Dr. James Thornton, and Protodeacon Father George Skvor, parishioners and a few visitors from San Diego and the Bay Area. The Liturgy chanted in a few languages - though primarily in Slavonic, Greek and English - was graced by the voices of the choir of the Convent of St. Elizabeth from Etna, CA as well. All present felt the tangible effects of the spirit of brotherhood.

+Archbishop Chrysostomos

New Testament (1862)

September 15, 2010 is a deadline for the submission of your requests for reprinted edition of the New Testament in Church Slavonic and Russian originally printed in 1862.

Services

All the announcements regarding the ROCOR church services held in California will be published in our Missionary Leaflets. All your needs in attending services (e.g., transportation and/or disability) have to be addressed in advance. We will do our best to assist you in carpooling and connecting with our parishioners who can give you a ride on the way to and from the services.

Donations

We are grateful to God for generous donations made in May 2010 by the ROCOR faithful to obtain supplies for the Church and Trapeza Hall. All the authorial and editorial contributions made toward the Summer 2010 Issue of the ROCOR Missionary Leaflet are greatly appreciated.

Calendars

A few Orthodox Calendars with Typikon for the year 2010 are still available at our bookstore. We are also still accepting orders for the next year Calendars until September 15, 2010. If you are interested, please contact the ROCOR Mission.

A Typo

There was a typo at the right bottom corner on p. 2 of the Russian Edition of the Missionary Leaflet No. 1. The correct postal code of our Mission must be read: 94587. We apologize for the inconvenience.