



# St. Silouan the Athonite

## Orthodox Mission Parish

### Quarterly Newsletter - Winter 2013/2014

become bridges. To these bridges, we entrust our full weight; we step out over chasms.

What are we, the parish of St. Silouan, if not a community of strangers and a settlement of vagabonds? The flotsam and jetsam of the broader Orthodox Church in Toronto. And converts, pilgrims from foreign confessions.

St. John the Compassionate Mission has always sheltered and often fed us, much as it has done for other strangers and vagabonds. In this, at least, we have communed with the people off the streets of South Riverdale. In our infancy, we have been spoon-fed by priest and deacons on loan to us, one might say, from the Mission; by and large it has been the Mission, more than the Parish, which has supported them. So the Mission has been very much like a mother to us, nursing us, carrying us within herself and within her embrace. Reciprocally, we have animated the fullness of the sacramental life of Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church within the Mission: we have offered up the Eucharist of bread and wine alongside that of soup and coffee. But possibly, the Mission could have done otherwise; certainly, we as a parish could not have.

In membership and resources, we see our community approaching that critical mass where we begin to resemble an established parish more than a start-up. The child has grown. The consequences of this reality play themselves out on multiple planes. One is our relationship to St. John the Compassionate Mission, viewed prospectively. Another is our growing share of responsibility, personal and corporate, for the continuity of the light of the **(continued on p. 14)**

Show the trees  
you care. Read  
the green version  
of this newsletter  
at [stsilouan.org](http://stsilouan.org).

### Dear Fellow Parishioners,

How is it that change can progress at so glacial a pace, and yet impress itself so suddenly upon our awareness? Virtually overnight, the autumn afterburn exhausts itself, and the icy clutch of winter takes hold well before the first snowflake falls. The signals of change can be so subtle and evanescent as to be nearly imperceptible, even while change itself is unmistakable.

Reflect if you will: do we not find ourselves at just such a moment in the maturation of our parish? Though the signs of change may defy documentation, can anyone deny the fact that we as a community are changed? What appeared, just a moment ago, a mere cluster of cells is suddenly a recognizable organism. The life of this body acquires a routine, a rhythm, a beat. A need arises, and reflexively our members move to meet it. The formerly timid, lately, are bold; we no longer await invitation, but rather, we initiate. Yesterday's visitor now confidently extends the open hand of hospitality. Those first fibres of Christian fellowship become cords, and cords become cables, and cables



## Mark your calendars:

### What?

**Christmas and St. Nicholas Day Celebration** – Featuring real live animals and saints! Festivities will include a pageant, carols, supper, and a visitation by Saint Nicholas himself. All are welcome.

**Youth Trampoline and Sky-Dodgeball Event** – The kick-off youth event of the 2013-2014 season. All youth ages 12-18 are invited.

Cost: \$15/head, includes trampoline-ing and pizza.

Find waiver at [www.skyzone.com/toronto](http://www.skyzone.com/toronto), bring signed.

For more info, please call Suzi 416 206 1079.

**Chis Fryer Chrismation** – During the Divine Liturgy.

**Divine Liturgy of the Feast of the Nativity** – Followed by carols and light refreshments.

**Melody Hung Chrismation** – During the Divine Liturgy.

**Annual General Meeting** – Includes adoption of 2014 budget, acclamation of parish council officers, discussion/voting on other parish business, and envisioning our future.

**Youth Retreat with Archimandrite Zacharias** – *Remember Thy First Love: The Stages of the Spiritual Life in the Theology of Elder Sophrony*. RSVP: [stjohnsmission@sympatico.ca](mailto:stjohnsmission@sympatico.ca).

**Adult Retreat with Archimandrite Zacharias** – *The Enlargement of the Heart*. RSVP: [stjohnsmission@sympatico.ca](mailto:stjohnsmission@sympatico.ca).

**Sunday of the Last Judgment** – Meatfare Sunday.

### Where?

Church

Skyzone Indoor  
Trampoline Park  
45 Esander  
Drive, Unit 1A  
Toronto

Church

Church

Church

Church

Church

Church

Global

### When?

Wednesday  
Dec. 11, 5pm

Saturday  
Dec. 14, 11am-  
1pm

Sunday  
Dec. 15, 10am

Tuesday,  
Dec. 24, 9pm

Sunday  
Jan. 26, 10am

Sunday  
Jan. 26, 1pm

Friday  
Feb. 14, 6-8pm

Saturday  
Feb. 15, 10am-6pm

Sunday  
Feb. 23

## Visit our bookstore, Pangar...

Recently acquired titles include two works by Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia:

***Orthodoxy in Dialogue with the Modern World, Volume V: Investing in the Kingdom of God***

(Montréal: Alexander Press, 2009). 77 pp, soft cover. \$15

***When God is Not There*** (Montréal: Alexander Press, 2013). 240 pp, soft cover. \$25

Check out Pangar's full collection at [stsilouan.org/Bookstore.html](http://stsilouan.org/Bookstore.html).



Laurentiu Albu,  
Parish Bibliographer

### Recent works by Debbie Falk:

St. Andrew, the  
First-Called



Sts. Joachim and  
Anna, The Meeting



St. Isaiah,  
the Holy Prophet



Archangel Michael



Jacob Wrestling  
the Angel

... every Sunday during the Agape Meal.



*Galilee, from Nazareth, of all places, tells Peter, a fisherman who had been fishing that Sea of Galilee all his life, to go, in broad daylight, and 'put down your net on the other side of the boat.'*

*"Peter obeyed even though it made no sense to him. How could a carpenter teach him how to fish? And in broad daylight! How nonsensical can you get? But he obeyed his entire word.*

*"At your word, I will do the impossible.' All that mattered to Peter was that the Master had asked him to do so... He says, 'We tried it, and it didn't work. But if you say so, we'll do it.'*

## **FIRST SLAVA**

**slava** ('sla:və) *n* [South Slavic *slava* / *слава*, lit. "fame, honour, glory"] Orthodox Christian custom of honouring a family patron saint, celebrated chiefly by the Serbs, but also by some Macedonians, Bulgarians, Croats, and Gorani. And henceforth esp. by the Carpatho-Russian parish of St. Silouan the Athonite.

Our parish marked the feast of our patron, St. Silouan, and our 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a parish, with our very first Slava held Sunday, September 22. And what a Slava! We are ever grateful to our Serbian brothers and sisters for prompting us to institute this beautiful custom at St. Silouan's.

Father Roberto addressed the following message to us:

*"Doxa Patri kai Yio ke Aghio Pnevmati...*

*"My Dear Brothers and Sisters, Fathers:*

*"The Gospel we heard today was a beautiful one. It shows us how the disciples who were fishermen - they knew their trade - had worked all night with no success. They had caught nothing. Not even one little sardine. (Of course there are no sardines in the Sea of Galilee.)*

*"Nothing. Nada. And Jesus, this carpenter from the backwoods of*



*"Both the Mission of St. John the Compassionate, and the Parish of St. Silouan, started with this assurance that it would not work. It would not last. It had been tried, and others had failed. Like Peter, for those of us who started to meet for the first few Sundays here at St. Silouan, it felt*

*foolish to start.*

*"It's ironic that the very first liturgy for this new, 'English-speaking parish' was for the feast of Pentecost. And we had a service that lasted well into the night. There were three people. And all of them did not speak a word of English. Not a word of English! For the first liturgy of another attempt at an English-speaking mission!*

*"And the flowers we had for that evening were provided to use by a homeless man who said, 'I know exactly what you need! What you need is a beautiful, wild blossom from an apple tree. There's a tree near where I have my tent, it's in full blossom, and I'll bring you those blossoms.'*



*"So we started the liturgy with this homeless guy coming on his bike, carrying all these branches of these wild blossoms, and three people who did not speak a word of English. And that's how the first liturgy at St. Silouan's English-speaking Mission Parish started.*

*"What has always been important for us, for this mission parish, is not to be English or French or Swahili, or to be big or small, or successful, or not. What always matters, I believe, is to be faithful to Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man of the Gospel. And not to quench the Holy Spirit, especially when it seeps in through the humble and the poor. What is more important than being English or French or German, or big or small, is to seek to be compassionate as our Heavenly Father is compassionate.*

*"The union that exists between this mission parish and the Mission of St. John the Compassionate has been a blessing both for you the Parish and the Mission. They are two aspects of one reality, of the same life: the life of the Church. You know, the only ones who make the distinction between the Mission and the Parish are you. The people who come to the Mission every day, they refer to this as 'the Church.'*

*"Orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Living humbly, one helping the other. I believe that the Lord will continue to bless this praying community as long as we continue to be faithful in Orthodox worship, and to welcome the poor, the suffering, the marginalized.*

*"Some today are*



*advocating in the Church a type of Orthodoxy that 'has teeth.' A 'real bite.' A very exclusive and rigorous group. Others advocate a more liberal, all-inclusive, undemanding church. But perhaps neither is needed.*

*"The Church in the local parish, I believe, needs to live the generous liturgical services, to be a place where the ascetical life is encouraged and nurtured. And equally - not less, not on the side, not when we get to it eventually, but equally - it needs to be a door open to all. Read St. Maria of Paris' writing on the asceticism of the open door and you will see what I mean. We need to be equally a door open to all who come in need of something.*

*"It is not enough to be the True Church, or to glory in a glorious past.*

*We need, today, to be more Orthodox: rigorous in the faith, and*

*challengingly*

*compassionate. St. Silouan the Athonite, we heard all yesterday, expressed so well what each of us needs to do today if we're going to be real, if we're going to be in the modern world, and if we're going to live in reality.*

*"It is a grace and a joy for me as your parish priest to see how in this mission parish community, lay people, you are living out your baptism, both in your own homes, and also here in the service of the Church..."*



[Here, Father Roberto thanked particular elements of the parish, including: the choir, and Choirmaster Peter; the parish council, and Jennifer, Chair; the Phos teachers, and Ioana, Director; the youth leaders, especially Michael, Paul, and Naomi; bibliographer Laurentiu; the Agape crews; the altar servers, and especially Alistaire; and the Deacons Pawel and Theodore. Father Roberto continued:]

*“Everyone who is called by God in His mercy to be a part of this particular parish brings a gift and a blessing. A blessing and a gift to be shared. I see it as the ministry of the priest in particular to help each of you to find your true place in the Body of Christ at St. Silouan’s.*

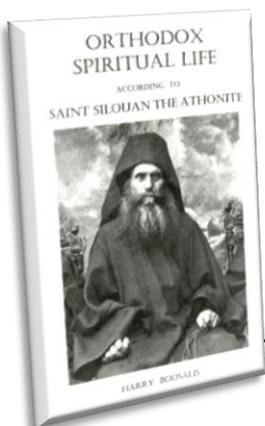
*“Today is a day to give thanks. To give thanks for the blessings received through this community of St. Silouan. We have, already, a little bit of a history. Thirteen years of blessings, seen and unseen, lavished upon us.*

*“But today is also a day to renew our desire to be like the Apostles in the gospel today. To leave everything and to follow Jesus. What does it mean, concretely, for you, for me, for each of us, to leave everything and to follow the Lord? What does it mean? Ask yourselves. How can I give myself more to each of you? How can we give ourselves more to Christ and to one another?*

*“In concrete ways. In the most practical ways that only love can make up.*

*“Glory to you, O Lord, who loves us so much that through the Holy Spirit you forgive our sins and reveal to us the mysteries of your love.”*

- Father Roberto



## PROFOUND WISDOM IN PLAIN WORDS

Dr. Harry Boosalis, professor of dogmatic theology at St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, conducted a seminar on the life and teachings of St. Silouan, September 21, to mark our patron’s feast day. Professor Boosalis is a uniquely qualified messenger. Not only has he studied and written extensively about St. Silouan, but he has also enjoyed a personal acquaintance with Elder Sophrony, St. Silouan’s direct disciple and hagiographer.

Much as we can regard Dr. Boosalis as a link to our patron, the professor presents the saint himself as a crucial link between the ancient Church Fathers and our modern world. People today, he says, will find St. Silouan eminently relatable for the sheer ordinariness of his experiences as a young man, and for his coming of age in a world undergoing tremendous social, political, philosophical, and technological transformation. Boosalis devoted his presentation to three topics about which the starets Silouan – an unlettered Russian peasant – spoke from personal experience with powerful simplicity. The first segment of the presentation dealt with spiritual warfare, the second with suffering, and the third with universal love. From St. Silouan’s teachings, often formulated in fresh and original terms, Boosalis consistently teased out common threads woven through the writings of various fathers of antiquity, and ultimately tethered firmly to the verses of Scripture or to the words of our Lord Himself.

Fr. Roberto remarked on the professor’s gift for conveying a profound message in plain, accessible language, perhaps in emulation of his subject. Putting that gift to use, Dr. Boosalis illuminated for us the familiar exhortation of our patron to “keep your mind in hell, and despair not.”

This was Dr. Boosalis’ first visit to our parish, though as Fr. Dn. Pawel expressed, we hope that it will only be the first of many. Meanwhile, those who missed the seminar might profit by reading the professor’s book entitled *Orthodox Spiritual Life According to Saint Silouan the Athonite*.

# NUMBERS

| <b>St. Silouan Financial Reports Jan-Dec 2013</b> |                     |                      |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                                     | <b>Budget 2013</b>  | <b>Jan-Dec 2013</b>  |
| Donations-Indiv/Org                               |                     | \$ 99,350.45         |
| Donations (Anon)                                  |                     | \$ 11,081.78         |
| Candle Collections                                |                     | \$ 4,411.23          |
| Incense & Charcoal                                |                     |                      |
| Kids/Youth/St.mary retreats                       |                     |                      |
| Bookstore Donations                               |                     | \$ 305.00            |
| Bookstore Sales                                   |                     | \$ 1,515.00          |
| <b>Total Income</b>                               |                     | <b>\$ 116,663.46</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                   |                     |                      |
| Fr.Roberto Stipend                                | \$ 25,000.00        | \$ 25,000.00         |
| Caretaker   | \$ 4,500.00         | \$ 4,500.00          |
| Mission Rent                                      | \$ 3,600.00         | \$ 3,600.00          |
| Choir Budget                                      | \$ 13,350.00        | \$ 13,350.00         |
| Phos Budget                                       | \$ 1,000.00         | \$ 2,632.09          |
| <b>Total Sunday Liturgy Exp.</b>                  | <b>\$ 47,450.00</b> | <b>\$ 49,082.09</b>  |
| Clergy Visitations/Retreats                       | \$ 6,000.00         | \$ 8,033.86          |
| St.Sil. Children/Youth                            | \$ 5,000.00         | \$ 5,000.00          |
| St.Mary of Egypt Retreats                         | \$ 750.00           | \$ 545.93            |
| Travel Expenses                                   | \$ 500.00           | \$ 1,123.85          |
| Counselling Services(St.M)                        | \$ 3,000.00         | \$ 3,000.00          |
| Tithing   | \$ 5,000.00         | \$ 6,558.00          |
| <b>Total Parish Activity Exp.</b>                 | <b>\$ 20,250.00</b> | <b>\$ 24,261.64</b>  |
| Liturgical Supplies                               | \$ 4,000.00         | \$ 7,878.84          |
| Renovations/Maintenance                           | \$ 1,300.00         | \$ 751.69            |
| Candles (Offering)                                | \$ 2,000.00         | \$ 594.00            |
| Chapel Furnishing                                 | \$ 500.00           | \$ 2,381.79          |
| <b>Total Chapel Expenses</b>                      | <b>\$ 7,800.00</b>  | <b>\$ 11,606.32</b>  |
| Bookkeeper  | \$ 3,000.00         | \$ 3,000.00          |
| Admin Assist.                                     | \$ 1,800.00         | \$ 1,800.00          |
| Auditor   | \$ 600.00           | \$ 600.00            |
| Telephone/Internet                                | \$ 1,000.00         | \$ 1,000.00          |
| Bookstore exp.                                    |                     | \$ 1,149.11          |
| Office Supplies                                   | \$ 1,000.00         | \$ 1,000.00          |
| <b>Total Office Expenses</b>                      | <b>\$ 7,400.00</b>  | <b>\$ 8,549.11</b>   |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                             |                     | <b>\$ 93,499.16</b>  |
| <b>Budget 2013</b>                                | <b>\$ 82,900.00</b> |                      |
| <b>Net Income</b>                                 |                     | <b>\$ 23,164.30</b>  |

# STEWARDSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

**Milutin Drobac**  
Stewardship Officer, Parish Council

This morning I was awakened by the radio announcer's anguished report of yet another part of the world in crisis. Having been conditioned to accept whatever the media say with a grain of salt (not to mention senses having been dulled by the daily barrage of wars and pestilence), and once I learned of their urgent pleas to send more dollars to a charity of their choice, I hit the 'alarm off' button, got up and trundled off to work. The rest of the day brought more disturbing news. Over the next sixteen hours, almost until time to retire, there were a dozen texts (eternal drought in Africa), emails (Shriner's hospital in crisis), pop-ups (save the temperate rainforest), unsolicited calls (police ball; firefighter's picnic; etc.), and once I got home, junk mail, and more unsolicited calls. Just as they stopped and I decided to sit and read a bit before going to bed, a 'neighbour' knocked on the front door (looking only vaguely familiar), and signed me up for his marathon charity walk in support of preserving a 'lichen growing on the eastern slopes of Blue Mountain' (not really – but you know what I mean). They want your money, and if you fail to give, then they offer you... guilt. Apart from the charities are a multitude of one-time 'offers' and 'buys,' all desperately demanding our money, promising us the world in return, but in fact delivering precious little. Regardless of the worthiness of the cause, this is how the world works.

The Church has a very different take on this (apart from those parishes that have adopted the banner of fundraising using the above techniques). In the Church we have the Gospels, the prophets, the angels, and all the saints, and every one of them preaching the same sermon. This is the sermon of thanksgiving – for the life we have been given; for the air we breathe; for the food

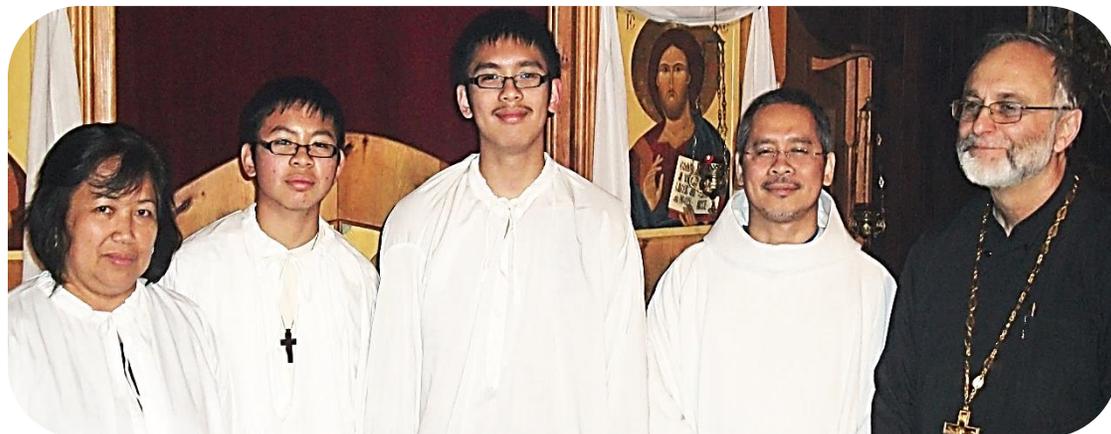
that nourishes us; for the work we are able to do with our hands and with our minds. God also asks for a return, but only a small portion of that which he has already given us. God gives us breath, and we respond with directing some of our breath back to God – so the psalmist sings: *all that breathes praise the Lord*. It is really that simple. Fr. Roberto's sermon to the children two weeks ago was all about this. We have been given everything from God, and in thanksgiving we share God's gifts with each other. The instruction to *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mk12:30)*, is one of the best-known scriptural commands. The heart, soul and mind are easy, but what exactly does it mean to love God with all of our strength? It certainly has nothing to do with weightlifting or jogging.

Think on this. What is this strength that God gifted personally to me? Why? How do I redirect it back to God?

Our parish council, over the last one-and-a-half years, has embarked on a plan to introduce the idea of stewardship to our parish. Whatever duty or job we take, at home, at work or at church, we become the stewards of that task. It is our responsibility, and ours alone. In the Church it takes on a spiritual dimension. It is a *podvig* – a spiritual effort. In Slavonic the word for stewardship adds another dimension – the word *starateljstvo* has a dual meaning, not only to take responsibility, but also to be an elder – to be wise in our works. In this way we wisely offer back to God a portion of what He, in His Wisdom, has given to us. The system for doing this at St. Silouan's Parish is still a work in progress. Although we have a stewardship program started, it is in its infancy. Over the next two months our council will try to flesh out, firstly, the spiritual concept of stewardship, and then a practical program applicable to every parishioner. It is our sincere hope that over time all of us will see that to be a member of the Church is one and the same thing as being a steward of God's creation.



## **KNOCK KNOCK KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR**



Edgar, Myrna, Jonathan, and Daniel Tibayan received the sacraments of Holy Chrism and the Eucharist at the Divine Liturgy Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. They took the names Arsenio, Ruth, Nathan, and Lucas. We celebrate their homecoming and we congratulate their sponsors, Paul Tadros and Naomi Funk.

The Tibayans' journey into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church has been long and winding. They knocked on many, many doors along the way. They knocked on Greek doors. They knocked on Russian doors.

They knocked on Albanian, Ukrainian, and Coptic doors. Theirs is as much a story of sheer, dogged persistence as it is a story of Divine Grace. Persistence, Grace, and the Internet.

Edgar and Myrna hail from the Philippines; they arrived in Canada, separately, in the late 1980s. Myrna worked in Hong Kong for a stint in between. Edgar adamantly denies having sported a mullet at the time. They met in Toronto.

Jonathan, 17, and Daniel, 14, were born in Toronto. Both are accomplished swimmers and aspiring musicians. They currently attend grades twelve and nine, respectively, at Woburn Collegiate Institute in Scarborough.

Both Edgar and Myrna grew up in the Roman Catholic Church which predominates in the Philippines, yet both found themselves in the Baptist denomination by the time they met. Edgar credits Roman Catholicism for sowing the "seed of faith" in him, and for instructing him in Trinitarian and Christological theology. He cites his mother as a powerful influence on his faith, especially through her intense devotion to the Mother of God. Edgar reminisces about walking barefoot as a child, some five kilometers with his mother and brother from their home to Manila to celebrate the Feast of Jesus the Nazarene.

As a youth, Edgar explored charismatic movements, but his mother eventually encouraged him to follow her in becoming Baptist. Myrna joined the Baptists independently while in Hong Kong. It was as a Baptist that Edgar developed his ardent love of Holy

## **FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE**



Our parish joined with the community of St. John the Compassionate Mission, Monday, November 11, to celebrate the feast of St. John the Merciful of Alexandria.

For us the Parish, celebrating as we do our two patrons, Sts. Silouan and John, this time of year is an especially opportune moment to reflect on the bonds of unity between the two overlapping communities, Parish and Mission, spun through a shared history.

Parishioners have been invited to take the icon of St. John, above, to their homes to offer daily prayers on behalf of the community.



Scripture aflame within him to this day. It was as Baptists, at Dovercourt Baptist Church in Toronto, that he and Myrna were married, and that Jonathan and Daniel were “dedicated” as infants.

But eventually Edgar came to feel that he had hit a dead end:

“There was a longing to connect to the Church of the Apostles. I read Baptist history, but I couldn’t go back beyond the Reformation,” he recalls.

Ultimately, Edgar’s conviction in favour of infant baptism led him to his first encounter with Orthodox Christianity via internet chat rooms and other internet fora. As he investigated further, he was deeply impressed by the Trinitarian Theology, Christology, and Soteriology of the Orthodox Tradition, and by our Church’s veneration of the saints.

“[T]he discovery of Orthodoxy was like finding a treasure chest,” he relates. “Things that I had read and had hoped to see in the Baptist Church, now I see plainly in the Orthodox Church. There is that connection to the Apostolic Church... Having longed to connect to the Apostolic Church, I decided to join Orthodoxy.”

Edgar encouraged the other members of the family to learn more about the Orthodox Faith. But finding a parish in the GTA where they could put down their roots proved a formidable prospect.

For several consecutive Sundays in 2000, the Tibayans attended Christ the Saviour Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the OCA. The solemnity of the service made a lasting impact on Myrna. Edgar’s mother tagged along once, and was impressed to see the congregation standing throughout the whole service. Edgar appreciated that at Christ the Saviour, unlike the typical Protestant parish that he had seen, children were included among the congregation during the liturgy.

But at Christ the Saviour, and subsequently at church after church in the GTA – Edgar googled them all – the Tibayans ran up against the language barrier. Many times the family would turn out on a Sunday morning for a liturgy advertised as being conducted in both English and a mother tongue, only to find that the use of English was restricted to the Lord’s Prayer, and maybe the Creed. They seriously considered crossing the border each week

to liturgize in the US, and might have done so but for the lack of a driver’s license.

Yet the two parents felt a strong sense of urgency about baptising their boys. After much hesitation they finally relented and had Jonathan and Daniel baptised in the Anglican Church. Myrna and the boys would regularly attend St. John’s Anglican Church in Scarborough. Meanwhile Edgar, never at peace with this state of affairs, would devote many Sunday mornings to visiting one Orthodox parish after another in search of a spiritual home for his family and a portal into the True Faith.

Then one Saturday in May of 2013, by the grace of God and the power of Google, Edgar stumbled across St. Silouan’s website. He explored the site – the musical recordings, the videos, the articles – until he was satisfied that he had indeed found his unicorn, an English-speaking Orthodox Church in the GTA. “I found an Orthodox Church!” he proclaimed to the family. “We will go tomorrow.”

And so they did.  
But oh...



A unicorn

The doors! The doors! Locked, is how the Tibayans found them! Or, at least, so they found one of them. The first Sunday they came, the Tibayans tugged only on the right-hand side of the double doors, whereas we habitually open only the left. Mistaking the church to be closed, they turned back disappointed. (Which makes for a compelling argument in favour of unlocking both doors henceforth. Seriously. We should consider it. But your editors digress.)

Happily for them and for us, they tried again the following Sunday with better results. Apart from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom served substantially in English, they appreciated the parish’s warm hospitality. They were especially touched by the efforts of certain members, including Efraim, Jane, Paul, Steven, and not one but two Michaels, among others, whose simple greetings and friendliness made the Tibayans feel at home. But they reserve the deepest gratitude for Irina, who went out of her way to introduce them to Father Roberto and to make sure he knew of their desire to join the Orthodox Church.



Initially, Daniel found the liturgy at St. Silouan's confusing, for the most part, though he liked making the sign of the Cross. He remembers feeling a bit out of place at an unfamiliar liturgy and in the company of strange people during Agape meals. (He found some of us more strange than others, but declines to name names.) He did not relish fasting on Sunday mornings. But with time he has come to feel that St. Silouan's is where he belongs, which he attributes partly to the kindness he has found in his fellow parishioners, and partly to his trust in his old man.

Jonathan is thankful, along with his family, for their initiation into the Orthodox community and for their "reception of the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit" through Holy Chrismation.

Travelling an hour and a half from their home in Scarborough each Sunday morning remains a challenge for the Tibayans, but then it sure beats crossing international borders...

If indeed the Kingdom of heaven is taken by force, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew (11:12), then surely the family of Filipinos now in our midst are leading the assault.



conversations that seemed to carry on until the late hours of the night. Tim was Greek Orthodox, so naturally he would share stories about Jesus, and other things about the Gospels that he learned from his Sunday school classes. I didn't know much about Christianity, but whenever he shared about Christ, it affected me. I was intrigued and curious, and I often felt touched in a way I myself did not understand. Although these conversations never led to an immediate conversion, I somehow went from being an atheist to a theist – I started to believe that there must be a God. Perhaps this was also because my atheistic worldview seemed hopeless, fruitless, and depressing.

Despite becoming a theist, my life in practice did not change. I continued to live the same way as before. However, this all changed in my second year of university. I had befriended a few people, and one of them seemed different from the others. I soon found out that she was a Protestant Christian who took her faith very seriously, and who strived to live the way Christ taught. Her life influenced me to the point where I started to explore Christianity. Eventually, I came to the belief that Christ was real, and that the Scriptures were divinely inspired. So in my early twenties, I joined an Evangelical church and made a commitment to be a Christian. My life drastically changed during that period, not because I was a saint, but because for the first time in my life I began to pray and to have a relationship with God. It was as if a light went on and I saw the world and my life in a completely new way.

# MY JOURNEY TO ORTHODOXY

**Michael Dubinski**

Although my parents were born in Ukraine and my mother was baptized Orthodox, I considered myself an atheist for the first eighteen years of my life. I rarely thought about spiritual matters because it was of no interest to me, and God did not fit my worldview.

This began to change in the last two years of high school. I became close friends with a person named Tim, and every now and then we would get into spiritual

# REARRANGING DECK CHAIRS

I remained an Evangelical Christian for many years, though with time I felt I needed something more, something deeper. Then, about four years ago, a series of events led me closer to the Orthodox Church.

I was interested in theology, so I started a theology degree at Wycliffe College (an Anglican seminary). I had known much about Protestant Reformed theology, but very little about Church history, Roman Catholicism, or Orthodox Christianity. During my studies at Wycliffe, I began to learn more about the history of the Church, as well as the sacramental nature of the Church. All of this was new to me, but I found it fascinating. I started reading more about Roman Catholicism, which led me to explore Orthodoxy. I remember finding a Divine Liturgy service on Youtube for the first time, and within 30 seconds I thought, "I can never be Orthodox..."

It seemed so strange, yet it still captivated me. Orthodoxy appealed to me because of its consistency and stability, its emphasis on asceticism, and most of all, the depth and beauty of its theology and worship. There was so much that seemed foreign to me (venerating icons, incense, praying, saints, relics, etc.), and I struggled with much during my exploration of Orthodoxy. Still, I could not seem to go back to my previous Christian experience.

I found out about St. Silouan's through a colleague at work, and was surprised to hear that an Orthodox church that had English services was so close to home. I started attending, and soon realized that I wanted to be part of the Orthodox Church. Although I will always be grateful for my Protestant past, I felt like I had found my Christian home.

In May 2012, I became a catechumen, and after eighteen months of learning about and trying to live Orthodoxy, I felt it was time to take the next step. I longed for participation in the sacraments and receiving God's grace in a new way. So, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, I was chrismated. Although it has taken seventeen years as a Christian to get to this point, in a way it seems like this is just the beginning of a new and different journey.

It was with some trepidation that the parish council received Jennifer Venner's recent announcement that she would step down from her position as Chair in the New Year.

Jennifer has served as Chair since 2008. The ensuing five years of her tenure have been a transformative period in the life of our parish – a period during which our membership and our needs have increased in tandem, as revenues have more than doubled.

Consider, for a moment, just some of the ways in which we as a community have grown in our commitment to Liturgy, to Ministry, and to Mission, on Jennifer's watch:

Under Jennifer's leadership we have invested substantially toward Phos and other youth programs; most recently, for instance, four instructors have undergone formal training in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The stock of choral talent brought to bear on any liturgical service has swelled, qualitatively and quantitatively, since the parish committed to the employ of a certain very able and professional choir director. For our spiritual edification, we benefit from our own in-house and financially self-sustaining bookstore. We share

in new forms of ministry and outreach, as through parish tithing, St. Macrina's Counselling fund, and otherwise through our relationship with St. John the Compassionate Mission. Jennifer has worked to strengthen our ties of cooperation with the Board of St. John's Mission in



No overhead projector screens were harmed in the production of this image.

planning and providing for our joint future.

Jennifer would be quick to assign due credit to the various community members who have driven these and other important initiatives; just as readily, we recognize that her able administration helped to make them all possible. Without question, what we are today is due in no small part to Jennifer's dedicated service and sacrifice, for which we all owe her an enormous debt of gratitude. Though Jennifer is not our first Chair, it is fair to say that she has written the book – quite literally, in fact – on how to run the council of St. Silouan's Parish as we know it today. Neither is that the only book she's written during that time. She leaves a mighty big pair of shoes to fill – more precisely, an über chic pair of очень sassy pumps, if you know Jennifer at all.

Jennifer expressed to the council her utmost confidence that we can and will carry on most expertly after she has stepped down. We are glad that she is so sure of our post-Vennerian success, as that makes exactly one of us.

We expect that Jennifer will enjoy the reprieve from her duties as Chair, especially since she has so selflessly stayed on well past the point when for her own sake she would have liked to step down. Our one consolation is that she will not enjoy it too much: Jennifer will continue to serve on the parish council in another capacity. Let's just say, we made her an offer she couldn't refuse.

This much is clear: the next Chair, whoever it may be, had better start learning how to walk in heels.

*"Just when I thought I was out..."*



*... they pull me back in!"*

## KNOW YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

Following are the currently serving members of your parish council:



**Father Roberto Ubertino**  
**Rector**  
**Parish Council President,**  
**ex officio**



**Nicolaie Atitienei**  
**Youth Officer**



**Milutin Drobac**  
**Stewardship Officer**



**Nataliya Nebrat**  
**Treasurer**



**Aaron SanFilippo**  
**Chair**



**Linda van Voorthuizen**  
**Events Coordinator**



**Jennifer Venner**  
**Secretary**



**Kathy Wlasenko**  
**Events Coordinator**



## **PHOS: SUCCESS WITH CGS**

### **The Junior Teachers**

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) program is up and running in the junior Phos classes. Since October we have been trying our best to create an environment that will allow the children to be with God and with one another in a prayerful and respectful way. As always, the teachers are learning even more than the students. It is a constant challenge to remember that we are but humble servants, aiming to bring the children closer to the One who is the Truth and the Light.

As the children get used to the space and to the activities, we find that they choose to stay in the Atrium for longer periods of time, working on their drawings, arranging flowers, molding play-dough, setting up the altar table, or re-enacting narratives from the lives of Jesus and the Theotokos with small clay figurines. It might not look like they are praying, but unlike adults, young children don't have such a sharp distinction between prayer and play times. And in fact, there are



times when this becomes clear as we hear them softly hum the "Alleluia" melody while they work.

We feel blessed and honoured to be present with the children while they work, and we ask for the parents' continued support in helping the little ones participate more fully in the worship of the church. In the past two months we have taught the children some short hymns (the "Alleluia," the first two lines of the Doxology, and "Holy God"), and we demonstrated and practiced the Sign of the Cross and the metanias we do while venerating the icons. As these and other melodies and movements become familiar to the children, they will be able to recognize instances during the liturgy where they can participate along with the rest of the congregation.

We encourage you to come up and watch the children at work. It is truly a beautiful sight, and a respite from the constant business and noise that usually surrounds us.

## *Out of the mouths of babes...*

"I don't ever want to leave!"

- 6-year-old, clearly enjoying one of the first Phos lessons of the year.

In the Atrium, we have a model altar. During a lesson on the nomenclature of the altar items, the teacher showed and named each item: "the chalice," "the diskos," etc. When the teacher introduced "the Gospel" one child immediately and enthusiastically asked, "Can you read it to us???" When the teacher responded that we would not be reading from the Gospel on that day, because we were learning about the items on the altar, the children all breathed a collective sign of disappointment. We decided that from then on, we would always read something from the Bible every week, to satisfy the thirst that the children have for the words of the Gospel.

When discussing the prophecy of Isaiah: "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,*" a child (4) raised her hand and said: "Christ is in the sun!"

**(Dear Fellow Parishioners, p. 1 cont'd)** Gospel on Broadview Avenue. The intersection of these two planes may well define the course of our future as a parish.

As we outgrow our material dependency, our relationship to St. John the Compassionate Mission increasingly becomes a matter of choice. How do we understand that choice? What will be the enduring foundation of an ongoing relationship between Parish and Mission? Is it the building? Is it a question of legal status as a corporate entity? What else, if anything, distinguishes the parish of St. Silouan vis-à-vis St. John's from any other parish which may donate funds toward the Mission, or send volunteers? Is there any special element to what we as parishioners can offer as labourers at the Mission, as compared to any high school student, parolee, or ticketed driver who may volunteer? Engagement with these questions going forward is sure to be difficult and at times contentious both in theory and in practice, if history is any guide. But what is our vocation as the parish that we are, if not this? How does our connection to St. John the Compassionate Mission uniquely challenge and yet enable us to witness more faithfully to the Orthodox Faith, to Pentecost, to Christ crucified?

Father Roberto has framed this latter question for us many times in the past. But we know we cannot always leave it to him. Even his service to us is impermanent, and not so far from expiration. Many of us prefer not to think, much less talk, about his looming retirement in approximately four years' time; already, we feel a certain security we enjoyed ebbing like the daylight this time of year.

Facing into this dark uncertainty, do we find ourselves empty-handed? If Father Roberto truly has been such a treasure to us, as we say he has, and if he truly has poured himself out so thoroughly to us, as we see he has, are we not then rich? What have we gained, sitting and listening all these years like so many harlots and lepers and lawyers and demoniacs at the feet of the Rabbi? In fact, our deep sense of gratitude compels us to acknowledge the fabulous wealth we have received through Father Roberto's personal gifts, as well as through Word and Sacrament.

## Lord, have mercy...

Our members have asked all of us to remember the following persons in our daily prayers:

### Newly Enlightened

Edgar  
Myrna  
Jonathan  
Daniel  
Michael  
Christopher  
Melody

### Ill

Karen, her friends and family  
Nicholas  
Iskander  
Sharon  
Zamfira  
Ioana  
Gheorghe  
Toni

### Catechumens/Hearers

Lynn  
Rachel  
Simon  
Stephen

### Suffering

The people suffering in the Philippines  
The Syrian people

### Other

Stepan, Vera, their unborn child  
Ruth  
Victor  
Anne-Lisa

### Recently Departed

Yeffim  
Esther  
Harvey  
Noel

Members have asked that we join them in the following petitions:

1. For the persecuted Coptic Church in Egypt, that God will give them strength and endurance and joy through their suffering.
2. For the revelation of Christ, to all who have not yet received Him.
3. For those who serve Christ, that they may know the cost of discipleship, accept Jesus' commandments, and follow Him wholeheartedly.
4. For the married couples, to maintain them in peace and unity through their covenant with Christ.
5. For the purity of the youth, that they may wear the full armour of Christ, overcome the snares of the seducer, hate evil, and cling to holiness in Christ.
6. For the children, that they may learn to love the Lord and to adore the Church's liturgy and all its Traditions.
7. For our parish council, that their labour may bear much fruit of love and joy.

Like the servant in the parable, we can never hope to repay our debt. But we can be faithful stewards of our inheritance. We can reciprocate love. We can meet faith with faith and hope with hope. "Steadfast love and faithfulness meet," writes the psalmist (85:10,11). "Righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky." How will we the Parish of St. Silouan reciprocate with faith and hope and love toward our clergy, toward each other, and toward the physically and spiritually hungry who have yet to walk through our doors?

A suggested initial response: we the laity would give a tremendous gift to each other and to those yet to walk through our doors, by materially supporting our present and future clergy.

Do we sufficiently possess our inheritance that we are able to share it?

In recent weeks, we have seen many of our members confess an acute sense of overabundance, by glowing acts of generosity. We sense an irrepressible desire among our members that we jointly take up our own peculiar labour of love. Also, many have expressed a hunger for further engagement, through common reflection and discussion, with the questions which our community is presently called to live. Your parish council is committed to do its part in the new year, in collaboration with our shepherds the clergy, to provide focus and coordination for those gracious impulses within our parish, and to facilitate the communal, interpretive dialogue which, according to one Father John Behr, has always been the hallmark of our Orthodox Tradition. We hope to further those efforts through these pages, at our upcoming Annual General Meeting, and in many other ways besides.

Wishing all of our members a most blessed Feast of the Nativity, and all the comfort and hope of its promise that from the darkest darkness shines the brightest Light,

Your servants,  
The Parish Council

## Schedule of Liturgical Services

### Wednesday

|                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>11:30am</b> | Noon Prayer                   |
| <b>4:00pm</b>  | Reader's Vespers or Anointing |
| <b>6:55pm</b>  | Bridges                       |
| <b>8:30pm</b>  | Compline                      |

### Thursday

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| <b>11:30am</b> | Noon Prayer |
|----------------|-------------|

### Friday

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| <b>7:00am</b>  | Orthros     |
| <b>11:30am</b> | Noon Prayer |

### Saturday

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| <b>12:00pm</b> | Noon Prayer |
| <b>6:00pm</b>  | Vespers     |

### Sunday

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| <b>8:45am</b>  | Orthros        |
| <b>9:45am</b>  | Divine Liturgy |
| <b>12:00pm</b> | Agape Meal     |

For confession, or discussion with a priest, call Father Roberto at 416 466 1357 x3 or 416 466 5877.

## St. John the Compassionate Mission – Hours of Ops

|  |                   |  |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <b>Wednesday</b>                                       | 8:00am – 12:00pm  | Volunteers                             |
|  | 11:00am           | Prayers                                |
|  | 1:00pm – 4:30pm   | Drop-in                                |
|  | 4:30pm            | Dinner                                 |
|  | 6:55pm            | Bridges/Lectures                       |
|  | 8:25pm            | Compline                               |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | 8:00am – 11:30am  | Work/Drop-in                           |
|  | 11:30am           | Prayers/Lunch                          |
|  | 1:00pm – 4:00pm   | Work/Drop-in                           |
| <b>Friday</b>  | 7:00am – 8:30am   | Orthros                                |
|  | 8:30am – 11:30am  | Work/Drop-in                           |
|  | 11:30am           | Prayers/Lunch                          |
|  | 1:00pm – 4:00pm   | Work/Drop-in                           |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | 10:00am – 11:00am | Coffee Hour                            |
|  | 11:00am – 1:00pm  | Lunch/Drop-in                          |
|  | Seasonal          | Seasonal                               |
| <b>Sunday</b>  | 8:45am            | Orthros                                |
|  | 10:00am           | Divine Liturgy                         |
|  | 12:00pm           | Agape Meal                             |
| <b>Winter Breakfast Program November 18 – March 31</b> |                   |  |
| <b>Monday – Friday</b>                                 | 5:30am – 8:30am   | Drop-in breakfast, snacks, coffee, tea |
| <b>Sunday Suppers until March 31</b>                   |                   |  |
| <b>Sundays</b>   | 4:30pm – 7:30pm   | Drop-in dinner, snacks, coffee, tea    |
| <b>Other Services</b>                                  |                   |  |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | 1:00pm – 3:00pm   | Housing                                |
| <b>Friday</b>  | 12:00pm – 2:00pm  | Diabetic clinic                        |
| <b>Thursday – Friday</b>                               | 1:30pm            | Foot care                              |