

St. Silouan the Athonite Orthodox Mission

PARISH REVIEW



Zivka Drobac
Memory Eternal



Testimonies from the newly illuminated
A word from Father Roberto

Photos from parish events
And more ...

Why Should We Be Present When the Divine Liturgy Begins?

by Father Roberto Ubertino

Understand that for families with young children getting to church can be a big challenge and I do not want to add more stress to parents' lives. For families with children a certain "economy" is permitted. However, I have noticed in many parishes—and ours is no exception—that even people without children come late and then proceed to receive Holy Communion. This is happening not because people do not love the liturgy or are just lazy. We have accepted this "innovation" because we have lost the sense of the priesthood of all believers. We see the Divine Liturgy as basically a clergy "thing."

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh addressed this question in the best way. Please take a few minutes to reflect on his words.

"The liturgy is celebrated by the whole body not by the ministers alone. And this is why I have said more than once that no-one should come and receive Holy Communion who has not been present from the beginning of the of the service—unless of course a major impediment intervenes. Because otherwise he is not making the liturgy. If someone arrives half-way through the liturgy and claims to have communion, he



is treating the liturgy as though it were a restaurant in which various cooks are preparing the meal: he comes when he has time and claims his portion.

This is very important: we must recover the notion that the laity includes the clergy. And in that case the different members of the ordained ministry will have their own proper place in the building of the Church."

From The Living Body of Christ

(pp 127-8) by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

In the original usage of the Church in Constantinople the people would already be gathered in the church waiting for the entry of the clergy. We need to grow in this understanding that it is the whole church that celebrates the Divine Liturgy and that includes each and all of us.

The Child I Love, But Never Met

by Father Deacon Theodore Alamanos

Before I became the Director of Community at St. John the Compassionate Mission, I was a teacher for 20 years and a regular weekend volunteer at the mission. In the summer of 2009, however, I was fortunate enough to receive permission from my seminary to complete a short internship with our Lived Theology School. As a component of my seminary training, I was required to learn from the St. John's community.

One Thursday in the late morning, a man and a woman arrived at the mission. Father Roberto remembered them from our time at Blake Street (20 years earlier). Father greeted them and they asked to speak to him in private. After they spoke for a while, Father asked me to sit with them for lunch. The husband was not overly inviting but the woman warmly greeted me and asked me to join them for lunch. She told me how they live in another city now but used to live in Toronto and attended the mission regularly. I asked them if they were planning to stay but she replied that they were here for only a few days but wanted to visit the mission. Suddenly, the husband stood up abruptly and left. She then turned to me and told me why they were in Toronto.

She was seven months pregnant and was scheduled to have a late-term abortion the next day. I was stunned. She continued to tell me how she wanted to keep the child but her husband was adamant that she have an abortion. As she began to cry, she reached for my hand, squeezed it, and said she was torn: she truly wanted to keep the baby but could not end her marriage over it. I asked her about putting the child up for adoption, but she said her husband was against that as well. I even offered to adopt the child but she still came up with a reason why she needed to abort.

Nonetheless, once she stopped crying, she asked me if I had any children of my own. I told her I had a four-month-old daughter. She asked what her name was, and I told her "Maria." She looked at me and said she, too, was having a daughter.

After spending the afternoon with us, we had a breakthrough! The couple decided to go to a counselor about putting the child up for adoption. They arranged to meet Father Roberto the following morning at 8 a.m. and he would escort them.

The following morning came but they never showed up. Finally, they arrived around 11 a.m. She told us that they had gone to the abortion clinic that morning instead and she was already induced. I sat with her and she asked to hold my hand again. She began to cry uncontrollably. She told me she was scared and knew that she will never be forgiven for doing this. Then, just like that, she stopped crying, turned to me, and asked me for two things: to name her child Maria and to keep Maria in my prayers always. With that, she hugged me, said goodbye, and left. I never saw her again.

After the shock wore off, I went into the chapel where I cried and prayed. I cried for an innocent child who was never given a chance, but I also prayed for a mother who decided this poor child's fate. For some strange reason, however, I couldn't judge anyone. I fulfilled my promise and lit a candle for the handmaiden of God, Maria, and wrote the name "Maria" in the prayers for the souls of the departed in my Proskomidie book.

From that day on, Maria had an identity. She was a child of God, and though I never met her, she became a very important part of my life. Everyday, I light a candle for her. Every Divine Liturgy, I read her name



for the souls of the departed. Every Chain-of-Life, I hold the same name year after year with her name on it.

Though I never met her, Maria became a part of me and truly changed my life forever.



Remembering Zivka Drobac

by Father Deacon Pawel Mucha

*As read by Father Deacon Pawel
Mucha at her vigil*

I can't say as much about Zivka as many of you here could do. So instead, a few words about Baba! She was Baba, of course, to her own family, so why am I calling her Baba? She wasn't my Baba after all. But that is not true. She was my Baba and she was—is—the Baba of everyone in the parish and the community here. When you

hear the word “Baba” in this place, it means only one person. Baba Zivka. I suspect there are people who didn't actually really know her Christian name. They just knew she was Baba.

She was the oldest member of the parish and was treated as the “starosta” of the community—perhaps not in the technical sense of this word, but she was the eldress of the community. She didn't look for this status—certainly never

demanded this status, never expected to be treated as anyone special, particularly due to her age. But spontaneously she was given this status of starosta, the eldress, among us, not because of what she was, but because of who she was. The person she had become through a life that was not without its sorrows but which shone with a simple joy in life and in others. This same simple joy that she had in her relationship with God.

Her life was long and only about six percent of it was spent as a member of the community here, but the impact of her presence here was way above any six percent. It will be hard to think of her not being among us physically, although what she brought here will live on for years to come. She was already in her 80s when she came here to a community in many ways very different from the Serbian community in which she had lived. This is a very diverse and mixed community to which she adapted amazingly well, especially at an age when the new can be difficult to deal with. Baba may have been old in years but she was young in spirit right to the very end of her life. She accepted the new and brought to us all that she had learned and that was precious to her. This is probably the only parish in our Carpatho-Russian diocese that has a parish slava—a tradition unique to the Orthodox Serbs. That slava in nine days time will be tinged with sadness that our Baba will not be present as our

“starosta,” but surely with gratitude also as she and her family brought it, and so much more, with them to this community.

I was told she did not want a eulogy, no praises—that is who she was, a truly humble person. Not that she was unaware of her human failings. I remember one evening catching a glimpse of her face at confession and being struck by the intensity and concentratedness of the expression on her face.

Her death was, in one sense, sudden but not unexpected. Not very long ago I asked her how she was feeling and her reply took me by surprise: “You mean, how am I feeling about the fact I am going to die soon? I’m fine with that and I am ready.” Then she spoke for a while about herself and her God and you knew that she was indeed ready. I know I am not alone (I have heard others say it too) but I was not entirely sad when I was told that Baba had died; there was also a gentle joy that she had completed her journey in this life and is now with the God she loved and

trusted so much.

I will end with a comment posted on Facebook by a member of the parish under a photograph of Baba here last Pascha, standing holding a burning candle with the light shining brightly on her radiant face:

“A beautiful woman and teacher of the faith, Baba Zivka proclaiming the glory of the Lord’s Pascha. May her memory be eternal!”

She was indeed a teacher of the faith, through her life and her person. She lived what our late Metropolitan Nicholas said: “Orthodoxy needs fewer professors and more confessors.” She was indeed a confessor of the Orthodox faith, as well as a loving and caring human being, and not least in making her home, as the Church should be, in the best Serbian tradition a welcoming place open to people of all nations, ages, and backgrounds.

Viechnaja pamjat Baba! Hristos vaskrese!



Baba, surrounded by her family

Holy Dormition



Baptism of Nicodim



Parish Picnic



Procession of the Holy Cross



My Journey

by Stephen (Seraphim) Burger

My testimony begins when I was in high school and I fell away from the church. I decided that “life is what you make it,” and the meaning of life is whatever you want it to be. I lasted until graduate school with this worldview, but then things finally fell apart while I was in the United States. I found myself re-evaluating the foundation of my life. Was there a God? How should I live my life? I started reading the Bible more, praying and asking God for a “sign” that He was out there. God responded with a part of Scripture that answered everything for me. It was then that I knew He existed and that He cared about me.

However, the Scripture was in the Old Testament, so I briefly explored Christianity, Islam and Judaism. However, the mere words of Christ in the gospels convicted me that Jesus was the Son of God. I started attending a Protestant church and later moved back to Canada.

In the Protestant church I found a huge gap between what it said in the Bible and what I heard preached: “Sell everything and give to the poor,” “Woe to the rich, well-fed, and well spoken of,” “You are not saved by faith alone,” “narrow is the way,” and so on. But every Protestant pastor I heard seemed to be saying, “Relax, Jesus died on the cross. Just believe and that’s it.” Then I stumbled upon the writings of the apostolic fathers and a biography of St. Francis of Assisi. I had no idea there was anything written beyond the Bible and I had never heard of a saint before. Learning about St. Francis radically changed my mind’s standard of what a Christian life could be.

I was drawn closer to ties I had in the Roman Catholic church and I started doing research into their dogmas and the ancient church in general. I was deeply impressed by many of Catholic laity, priests and nuns I met, but I didn’t connect with a congregation or



Matthew McLaughlin, Stephen Burger and Biancamaria Valencia are received into the Holy Orthodox Church on Holy Saturday before Pascha 2014

the catechesis program they offered.

In late 2012, at the suggestion of a friend, I found St. Silouan’s and St. John the Compassionate. I liked everything: the prayers, the volunteering and the liturgies. Once I became involved I never looked back. It’s been a long process to relearn the Christian faith, but I have been blessed to be part of a great church. I took a three-month pilgrimage to Israel and Eastern Europe earlier this year, which was absolutely fantastic. Thank you, everybody at St. Silouan!

Coming Home

by Biancamaria Valencia

On Saturday, April 19, 2014, when I was received into the Orthodox Church by chrismation, I came home. The significance of this date to me can be found in the meaning of Great and Holy Saturday.

I was raised Roman Catholic, and great importance was placed on Christ's suffering on the cross. For me as a child, Great and Holy Friday lived on every day of the year as almost every church I entered had a larger-than-life depiction of the crucifixion, along with the stages of the cross. Easter, on the other hand, held little meaning other than fuzzy rabbits and chocolates.

As I grew older I had many questions about the nature of this Trinitarian God, but most specifically about this God-man named Jesus. I read my Bible, but was confused by what I read. How could God be the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament? This confusion was only heightened by a variety of life events, most notably the breakup of my family.

My search in books over the entire length of my high school years came to one final conclusion. While God did exist, to me He was not a knowable God. The final thought I had then was that I could not have a personal relationship with Him. My absolute belief in this took me very far away from Him.

When I came to university, I was very interested in philosophy. I had already read Plato, Aristotle, Jung, Sartre, Camus, and a wide variety of other authors. But this had up to that point been done in isolation. I was excited to learn from others. This is where I would like to say I realized my error. However, I was too much in love with the things of the mind, and was too much in love with the things of the world.

Fast forward to adulthood. I had my teaching degree, a good job, friends, and while I suffered all my life from a variety of health issues, for the most part, my life was filled.

It happened on my way to work—the moment that changed everything. I got into a car accident coming off the 407 due to black ice. I called my sister, badly shaken, and she told me to keep moving as it wasn't

safe. I turned off of Kennedy Road and again the ice was slick. I pulled my car over, not wanting to hit anyone in case I was unable to slow down at the intersection. As I was reaching for my cell phone to call work, I saw glass go by my window, and heard the sound of the car that hit me from behind. I trembled and

“As I was reaching for my cell phone to call work, I saw glass go by my window, and heard the sound of the car that hit me from behind”

screamed in shock. It had not even been five minutes from the time of the last accident.

I was OK. I was not visibly injured. The other driver only had minor injuries, the paramedics said. But what came over their radio shocked me even more. There had been an accident, and the driver had not survived. It was where I had been only moments before. I felt such sadness and joy in that moment. I wanted to repent for all those things I should have changed but never made the time to do so and thank God. The problem I faced was that I didn't know who He was.

Thus began my search. It's been long. It's been filled with great sorrow and great joy. Many churches, many people, many experiences, many personal demons and sins faced. I'm learning to overcome, I hope.

And so we come to Great and Holy Saturday, Christ's repose in the tomb. In sorrow we wait. It is the emptiness I have felt in my heart. But this sorrow is only momentary as I realize—as we realize together—that Jesus has gone in search of His fallen friend, Adam. He descends into Hades and brings him life once again. He finds us even in the darkness and brings us back. It is this return home that I have experienced. And while it seems impossible at times to get a hold of this through all the ups and downs of life, every time I come to the Church I remember; she reminds me.

FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME	Budget 14	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14
Donations-Indiv/Org		\$4,785.00	\$9,195.30	\$10,290.00	\$12,795.00	\$8,305.00	\$7,585.00	\$8,636.50	\$5,755.00	\$8,210.00
Donations (Anon)		\$1,088.05	\$795.30	\$866.70	\$565.15	\$940.20	\$354.80	\$954.30	\$639.10	\$391.45
Candle Collections		\$512.00	\$353.11	\$314.50	\$633.91	\$188.55	\$279.90	\$140.45	\$286.45	\$278.50
Kids/Youth/St.Mary retreats inc		\$410.00	\$1,725.00	\$80.00	\$225.00	\$160.00	\$319.20	\$260.00		
St.Silouan Bookstore		\$6,795.05	\$12,068.71	\$11,551.20	\$14,219.06	\$9,593.75	\$8,538.90	\$9,991.25	\$6,680.55	\$8,879.95
Income Total										
EXPENSES										
Rector's Stipend	\$29,546	\$2,448.66	\$2,449.06	\$2,449.06	\$2,449.06	\$2,449.06	\$2,449.06	\$2,449.06	\$2,527.76	\$2,370.36
Caretaker	\$4,950	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50	\$412.50
Mission rent	\$4,800	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$400.00
Choir Budget	\$14,690	\$1,361.66	\$1,211.66	\$1,211.66	\$1,211.66	\$1,211.66	\$1,211.66	\$1,211.65	\$1,211.00	\$1,211.66
Phos Budget	\$2,140			\$136.95	\$141.08		\$524.60		\$63.00	
Total Sunday Liturgy Expenses	\$56,126	\$4,622.82	\$4,473.22	\$4,610.17	\$4,614.30	\$4,473.22	\$4,997.82	\$4,473.21	\$4,614.26	\$4,394.52
Clergy Visitations/Retreats/Honorariums	\$10,050	\$600.00	\$4,120.49	\$441.33	\$2,400.00	\$5,000.00	\$500.00			\$1,547.57
St. Silouan Children/Youth	\$5,000									
St. Mary of Egypt Retreats	\$750	\$71.81	\$500.00				\$100.00		\$350.00	\$274.10
Travel expenses	\$500			\$1,380.00						
Counselling services (St.Macrina)	\$3,000									
Tithing	\$10,000							\$5,000.00		\$77.00
Retirement	\$26,000									
Total Parish Activity Expenses	\$55,300	\$671.81	\$4,620.49	\$1,821.33	\$2,400.00	\$5,000.00	\$600.00	\$5,000.00	\$350.00	\$1,898.67
Liturgical supplies (including flowers)	\$4,000	\$413.95	\$401.56	\$113.17	\$1,760.05		\$3,033.07		\$1,269.07	\$780.04
Renovations/Maintenance	\$7,000				\$10.05					
Candles (offering)	\$2,000	\$630.00			\$720.00		\$540.00			
Chapel furnishing	\$500									
Total Chapel Expenses	\$13,500	\$1,043.95	\$401.56	\$113.17	\$2,490.10	\$-	\$3,573.07	\$-	\$1,269.07	\$780.04
Bookkeeper	\$3,300	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$275.00
Administrative Assistant	\$1,980	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$165.00
Auditors	\$600	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00
Telephone/Internet	\$1,000									
St. Silouan Bookstore		\$1,077.21		\$782.79	\$65.28		\$442.85			\$120.00
Office Supplies (Include Postage)	\$1,200		\$104.76	\$328.85	\$199.23					
Total Office Expenses	\$8,080	\$1,567.21	\$594.76	\$1,601.64	\$754.51	\$490.00	\$932.85	\$490.00	\$490.00	\$610.00
Budget 2014										
Total Expenses	\$133,006	\$7,905.79	\$10,090.03	\$8,146.31	\$10,258.91	\$9,963.22	\$10,103.74	\$9,963.21	\$6,723.33	\$7,683.23
Net Income		-\$1,110.74	\$1,978.68	\$3,404.89	\$3,960.15	-\$369.47	-\$1,564.84	\$28.04	-\$42.78	\$1,196.72

Stewardship 2015: Rededicating Ourselves

by Aaron SanFilippo

Again with the forms! Yes, once again we're approaching that time of year when we, as members of the parish of St. Silouan, renew our annual stewardship pledges. Yes, that means filling out another form.

We can, of course, approach this process as a tedious formality. Or, we can use it as an opportunity for prayerful reflection on the purpose of blessings received and on the meaning of our life as the Church. An occasion for thanksgiving.

Consonant with our understanding of the Eucharistic foundation of church community, we continue to grow into an understanding of parish membership defined by the practice of stewardship. Presently, the large majority of current member households already participate in our program of formal stewardship by pledging specific, quantifiable contributions of one form or another towards our collective work. We can be grateful for this fact, even while we look forward to a participation rate of one hundred percent.

As well, we may look forward to other concrete indicators of growth in our commitment to stewardship. It would be a positive sign to see more of our members taking up stewardship in its multiple dimensions—specifically, the time-talent-treasure triad. Presently, while three-quarters of member households have committed to practice stewardship in some fashion, the proportion pledging financial contributions in specific dollar amounts is about half. The proportion enlisted with Agape meal teams is also about half. And about a quarter have pledged specific commitments of time and talent towards other practical forms of stewardship.

Another positive sign would be to see financial stewardship pledges account for a substantially larger



Aaron SanFilippo (left), with Steve Atell

proportion of parish revenues. Presently, about half of actual 2014 parish revenues are attributable to stewardship pledges. Spontaneous giving will always be encouraged, and through the generosity of our members we have been blessed with sustained revenue growth in recent years. As we've discussed before, however, giving in fulfillment of an *ex ante* pledge entails benefits for parish and steward alike. Ideally, such pledges will constitute the basis of parish budgeting.

In the coming weeks, we can anticipate further teaching on the meaning of stewardship in Christian life. Meanwhile, with Fr. Roberto's blessing, your parish council will encourage existing members to submit 2015 Membership Renewal and Stewardship Pledge forms well before the Christmas holiday season is upon us. Forms will be available very soon. We appreciate your cooperation, input, and trust as we strive to administer our stewardship program with grace.

Aaron SanFilippo is the chair of the St. Silouan parish council.

All Are Slavs on Slava

Sunday, September 21, we celebrated the Feast of St. Silouan. While marking our 14th year as a parish, it was our second year honouring our patron with a Slava, in the beautiful custom of our Serbian brothers and sisters. On Slava, we're all privileged to be Serbs for a day. Special thanks to all those who helped bring it about.

We were graced with a visitation by His Grace, Bishop Ioan Casian of Vicina, of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas, who shares with us a devotion to St. Silouan of Athos. His Grace exhorted us to continue faithfully in our vocation as a parish after the example of our forebears in the Faith, from Abraham to Moses to the Theotokos. He reminded us of St. Silouan's profound love for all people and all creation; may we as a parish reflect that same love to South Riverdale.



St. John's Breakfast Program

The St. John the Compassion Mission's annual breakfast program begins Monday, November 3. Through this program, some 3,000 men, women, and children enjoy hot, nutritious breakfasts and respite from the cold Monday through Friday.

The parish council requests that members of the parish bring eggs and milk on Sunday mornings or during the week to support the program. Thank you for your generosity!

St. Silouan the Athonite Orthodox Mission

PARISH REVIEW

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For information about contributing to the next edition of the Parish Review, please contact Kristin Ostensen, parish council secretary, at kostensen@gmail.com.