

The Orthodox American

In Memoriam
Bishop Doug Wright

I have just finished presiding at our local Memorial Day service, where for the benefit of the young folks present, I recalled our duty to honor those who gave their lives in defense of their country in time of war. I can't help but think that Skip Carsten gave his life to the Christian Community of Jesus Christ and that we are honor bound to remember his gift. I ask the Synod therefore to order that the Chief Hierarchs Day be added to our sanctoral calendar so that our departed chief hierarchs and bishops will have an anniversary memorial service in perpetuity.

Devoted clergy are veterans of war, too, the perpetual war between good and evil. With Skip there was no half way; he jumped in and swam, often against the current. In all of our eight years of friendship and collegiality, I never heard him speak ill of anyone. He even felt genuinely sorry for those who had done him and the local church real harm. This was because he daily lived in full realization that Jesus lives among us in his Church family. Skip was unfailingly respectful even when you disagreed with him. The main thing he emphasized to me was that Jesus lives in us and our families and friends. It is a very simple concept to grasp. It also makes it easier to be patient, to have forbearance, and to expect a good outcome what-ever happens. It also permits us to accept our faults and shortcomings and despite them still make spiritual progress. Skip kept the message simple and he used words and expressions that even a child could understand. His utter unpretentiousness enabled him to minister to folks in high places and in jail. When Skip donned his vestments, it was to adorn the office and not the person.

I am so very glad that my parish and the folks in my neighborhood got to see our Chief Bishop, representing the national church. They saw a big, friendly, affable, smiling guy in a pointy hat and a blue gown. The local Baptists took great interest, I can tell you. "Call me Skip" went over well with our hometown Main folks, and they sat entranced as he preached the first sermon in our new Cathedral Church. The Baptists especially like it, and him. When Skip took the holy oil and made his way around the church, the crowd melted away, allowing him room. At the reception after the service, he visited with everyone from the children to the shy folks in the back. I got the impression that he considered himself head of a very large family and that he loved us all. He brought sunshine with him into the room. I miss him. Rest in Peace, Skip Carsten, thou good and faithful servant of the Lord.

OCCA Contact Information

Metropolitan Peter (Zahrt)
P.O. Box 5481
Fort Wayne, IN 46805-5481

Administrative Assistant Mother Maria

Dear Companions in the Ministry,

When Archbishop Alfred called to announce the results of the election, one of the first images in my head was the comment of President Ford when he appeared before Congress for the first time in that office. He said, "I'm a Ford, not a Lincoln."

Clearly, I am not E. Paul Brian Carsten. Our late archbishop was a man of extraordinary theological depth and range, with enormous people skills. He was one of a kind — as Bishop Doug's memorial witnesses.

What I bring by God's grace and the mentoring of fine people over many years is a different collection of skills. Hopefully I sing the same song, albeit with a different voice that praises God. It is my intention to do the best for you and for the national church. At the same time, I don't aim for perfection; I wish to be perfectly human rather than humanly perfect. Warts and all, I minister among you as a frail, imperfect person still on the journey.

As we inaugurate a new period of the Church's life, I hope you can join us in Auburn on September 12 for the Enthronement/Installation. The weekend will celebrate in Divine Liturgy, Morning and Evening Prayer, and in fellowship our varied histories and interests: the Oriental, Eastern, and Western voices. In fact, the theme of the weekend is "Many Voices, One Song." More information will be coming to you in July. You can always email Mother Maria for the latest information on programs and housing.

Chancery Appointments

I have been advised to hit the ground running, so some appointments have been made so that can happen. As it happens, many people are already involved in the operation of various parts of this national jurisdiction, so these appointments affirm their labors and announce new people who have joined in the work of administering OCCA. Other appointments will follow in later editions of TOA.

Everyone should have a hand in the building up of the Church, and especially it is reasonable that the membership expect to see their bishops and vicars engaged at the national level. I strongly encourage each and every member of OCCA to reflect on how your talents may lend themselves to the needs of our jurisdiction, and contact either me or one of the people on the list below to offer your time and talents.

Administrative Assistant to the Archbishop:
Mother MariaAlena Van Valkenburg.

Canon Law: Bishop David Kotajarvi, Mother Laura Emerson.

Enthronement/Installation Planning Group: Father John Newbauer, Bishop Lynn Elizabeth, co-chairs; Father Stephen Duncan, Father Ken Waibel, Mother Maria.

Episcopal Vicar for Special Projects: Bishop Vince Cuestas.

Finance: Archbishop Alfred Lankenau, Father John J. O'Connell; and others to be named.

Information Technology: Father Cliff Polubinsky.

Jubilee General Synod of 2010: Father Jim Brigl, Chair; and others to be named.

Liturgy Committee & Consultants: Bishop Lynn Elizabeth, Chair; Father Richard Cleaver, Father Ken Waibel; and Consultants: Father Stephen Duncan, Father Bill Payne, and Father Roger Vaughn.

Mentors to OCCA Monastics: Mother Barb Martzall, and Father Francis Fontenot.

The Orthodox American: Editorial Team: Father Kevin Kearney, Father Ralph Curtis, Francesca Fortunato, and others to be named.

Public Relations and Church Outreach: Father Richard Cleaver, Bishop Lynn Elizabeth, and others as needed

Sanctoral Cycle Calendar: Father Richard Cleaver
Vicar General & Dean of the Theology Institute:
Bishop David Kotajarvi; with staff and faculty to be named.

Vocation Team: Bishop Jim Gleeson, Father John Newbauer, and others to be named.

Webmaster: Mother Barb Martzall.

Diocese of the Western Great Lakes

The Diocese is herewith expanded to include northern Indiana, and to it are assigned the clergy of that region. Father John Newbauer has been appointed as Vicar in Indiana.

Diocese of the Eastern Great Lakes and South

With Bishop Elwood's departure, this diocese is herewith suppressed, and Father Kevin Kearney and Ken Waibel serve as Vicars of the Archbishop in their areas.

At Crosswood Centre in Auburn

Isabel Carsten, mother of Archbishop Skip, passed into the arms of the Lord, peacefully and quietly in her sleep. Her funeral was celebrated in Angola, Indiana on Friday, June 19, with Mother Joan North presiding and Archbishop Peter representing the members of OCCA. She is remembered by many of our members as extending hospitality to visitors. Please remember Isabel, Earl, and Skip Carsten in your prayers of joy, and remember, in particular, Seminarian Andrew Ferguson, Isabelle's nephew, and his wife Carol. They can be reached at 3 Great Basin National Park, Baker, Nevada 89311 or at ajferguson@basiscip.net. (He is the park superintendent). They have experienced great loss in the past year.

Archbishop Peter

Around the Jurisdiction

Diocese of Maine Bishop Douglas Wright

At Holy Apostles Parish, we have moved back into the main church after holing up in the sacristy all winter to save heat energy. We figure it costs us \$45 to heat the sacristy all winter, Sundays only. We are especially flattered and happy that the Cathedral Church and the Monastery residence have been included in Whitefield's Bi-Centennial House and Garden Tour as examples of notable energy saving construction.

This means that I have been slaving away in all the flower beds and vegetable gardens weeding and thinning, spading and getting them ready to receive the hundreds of seedlings growing in the greenhouse. You will note that at this monastery the Bishop pulls his own weeds! And he shovels manure, too!

I was asked to officiate at the Memorial Day services this year, a first in 30 years of ministry. I take it to mean that the town has finally accepted us as one of their local churches.

Mother Janna Hus continues to recover from her decade-long bout with Lyme Disease. Father Tonaldo doesn't answer his phone, so I regretfully have no news of his activities. Mother Barb and Mother Myrella are managing to hold things together in times of uncertain employment while also caring for Myrella's mother. Barb+ continues to use her considerable talents on the web site and her newsletter for the monastics.

As part of the Bi-Centennial celebrations, the Monastery is producing a live performance of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," to be presented in the Monastery's outdoor amphitheater under the pines. It is my intent to use the occasion to get people familiar with our church, and I'll erect a placard during the open house days advertising our availability for country chapel weddings and receptions.

I hope to have the bathrooms finished and the meeting rooms closed in and painted, so that we can host community meetings and groups such as AA. Even a Monastic church has to reach out, don't you think?

Come and see us when you come to Maine! We can accommodate RV's, we have tents, and we even have some sleeping bags!

All of us in the Diocese of New England wish to congratulate Mar Peter on his election. This writer regrets that the above activities preclude any absences and therefore we will be unable to attend Mar Peter's enthronement and installation. We extend our prayers and best wishes. May he have many years.

Diocese of New York and the Atlantic Coast
Bishop Lynn Elizabeth (Walker)

As the vicariate transitioned to the status of a diocese, we're happily in a "business as usual" mode, which is to say that our dedicated clergy continue to be very busy. Just recently, we saw the consecration of Mother Lynn to the episcopacy as Bishop Elizabeth, as well as the ordination of Father Nicodemus Gianelli to the order of priests. The celebration, led by Metropolitan Alfred, was very well attended, and we are grateful for all who traveled great distances, all who participated, and all who sent their regards, good wishes, and assurances of prayer. Particular thanks to our dear bishops, +Vince, +Peter, +Douglas, and +Jerry for traveling to Kearny, New Jersey, for this historic event. The diocese will begin planning for a clergy gathering in the Autumn of 2009, somewhere on the east coast. Stay tuned.

Father Bill Barkhorn has been providing worship services at a local skilled nursing facility near his home in New Jersey. Father Jim Brigl recently changed his secular employment as well as working with a local independent Catholic parish. He is working with Mother Deacon Robbin to re-activate the OCCA parish in Washington. Mother Francesca Fortunato continues to work on her college degree while serving as a Dean at the New Seminary and serving the parish community of St. John in New York. We welcome the return of Father Barry Lillis to this diocese; he will be doing his usual round of teaching this summer in addition to his energetic and gifted chaplaincy at Erie County Medical Center in Buffalo, and his ministry throughout western New York state. Mother Deacon Robbin Melchiorre is currently enrolled in the Shalem Institute, studying spiritual direction. She was recently accepted as a student at the San Francisco Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry Program in pastoral counseling. She continues to work to re-activate the parish community in Washington, DC. Father John O'Connell celebrates the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday evenings for a number of his friends and neighbors in the Stuyvesant Town neighborhood of Manhattan. Father Giles Spoonhour, who will be celebrating his forty-fifth anniversary of priestly ordination in June, continues to work with the New Seminary and the Interfaith Temple, as well as serving the parish community of St. John. After many years of service to the NYC Dignity community, Father Roger Vaughn recently "retired." He will, of course, maintain his membership in that prophetic faith community.

Diocese of the Western Great Lakes
Bishop David Kotajarvi

Good news! I have emails from instructors willing to volunteer their skills and time for the inaugural session of the Institute. Also, plans are being made to take the Institute to both coasts as well as convening at Crosswood Centre. The schedule is not complete — among other things due to the transition at the Centre following Archbishop Skip's passing. Look for more information in the mail.

It was +Skip's desire that we begin the Institute with a class on Orthodoxy and where we fit in as a jurisdiction. That, and some other choices will be available to you for this year.

If you wish to share your library with other learners, send me an email list and I will begin to assemble (what shall we call it?) virtual library.

Vicariate of Chicago
Archimandrite Donn Mielke

On the Fifth Sunday of Easter, the first lesson from Acts 8:26-40, spoke to me, causing me “joy filled with tears.” You recall the story. As Philip gets on the road to Gaza, having been sent by an angel, he encounters the Ethiopian eunuch, a high official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. The Spirit of the Lord spoke to Philip to “Go over to his chariot and join it.” In his study of Philip and “The Ethiopian Eunuch: Two Role Models for Inclusivity,” Wal Anderson points out that as Philip approaches the eunuch he questions the eunuch’s understanding of what he is reading. He applies a test of Orthodoxy: “Do you understand?” In reply he gets an Orthodox answer: “How can I unless someone guides me?”

Feeling like an outcast — “cut off” (as to the curse placed on anyone who is in exile, or sentenced to capital punishment) it recalls for me the arguments associated with Deuteronomy 23 and Leviticus 21. The eunuch asks, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or someone else?” Philip tells about the Good News of Jesus, he reveals the Suffering Servant.

The eunuch tests the good news. He inquires if any barrier keeps him from being baptized. Philip immediately orders the chariot to stop and baptizes him. For me, this is a prime reason for a lesbian and gay Christians and any marginalized person to shout out, “I am also included!”

This nameless eunuch, an outcast Black man, now the patron Saint of Ethiopian Christians, represents the first African Christian. This clearly completes for me, one who once felt like every outcast, the fulfillment of Isaiah 56, “that God’s house would become a house of prayer for all people.”

The Straight and Gay Alliance
Brother Michael C. Oboza

In this year, we are celebrating a decade of ministry in the Straight and Gay Alliance, founded after the death of Matthew Shepard. The Alliance is all about love, with prayer, fellowship, and civil activism. Here is a testimony from “Gino”:

Street life for a young gay addict like me goes untold. After I was attacked one night, I wasn’t the same. I yelled for help. No one cared. I thought that, but I was proven wrong. A concerned stranger told me that “hurt passes.” I was curious about what he meant, and so we shared Evening Prayer on the Blue Line train in Chicago. I was moved. After our fellowship, I became a member of his Straight and Gay Alliance.

Columns

The OCCA Web Site

Our web site has been very busy over the years; in looking at the counter statistics, you soon realize that all pages are read by people all over the world. It is really great to see such interest.

I have been told that often someone seeking a home church, whether clergy or laity, find us through our web site. It is really important, therefore, that our pages are easy to move about and have plenty of information. Such a goal isn’t always easy, since web page coding does not easily lend itself to some desires in layout — something that Archbishop Peter and I banter about occasionally. I do try to overcome those issues whenever possible.

Recently, I just finished revamping all the pages. I redid the menu and reset the pages to a new validating checking level in preparation for the next set of standards that will be out within a year. The standards keep me really busy since every few years they are updated. I work hard to see that the pages are easily viewed in any type of browser. I am still very “old fashioned,” for I sit and hand code each and every line!

Also, I monitor who is linking to us. It is important that people are not breaking our copyright. I have taken the stance to protect the church and clergy by what I do and do not put on the web — like the photos, which were sometimes taken by others for their own use.

Of course, I am open to having more writing on the web pages. It needn’t be long, but should remain within the guidelines of OCCA and our theology. And it has to be original. I check to make sure our texts do not have copyright issues. We are keeping things very simple in the long run. You, of course, are free to print anything to share with your congregation.

The Silver Lining Father Barry Lillis

This is a new column about problem solving. Here is how it works. Someone in OCCA has a problem. For that someone else in OCCA just might have a solution. For example:

Question: I am having a difficult time finding a public place to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. Any suggestions?

Response I had that same problem. Then I found that the old Municipal Building rents out at \$25 a session.

More than one of us may send a response of course, and the answers would probably be a bit longer than the sample. The Q&A can be about anything that is related to ministry.

Here are the mechanics of it all. Send via email your questions to me. If you don't have email, use the USPS or phone me. I'll format the problem into a question and publish it on the OCCA chat site. The OA will publish some questions and responses in each issue.

Contact me at 716-595-3916, at PO Box 414, Cassadaga NY 14718 or pattycak@netsync.net.

Featured Essay

Ikons and Idols

Father Richard Cleaver

One of the most attractive elements of Orthodox spirituality is the use of ikons. There are a number of books on the spiritual practices associated with ikons by both Protestant and Roman writers (I am thinking particularly of Henri Nouwen's *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*). Yet for many Christians, the notion of praying "to" an ikon can be quite scandalous — nothing less than idolatry. We should not be defensive about the association; there surely is a connection between ikons and idols, if not the one I just mentioned.

The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 (commemorated in Byzantine-rite churches on the first Sunday of Lent, "the Sunday of Orthodoxy") ended the Iconoclast struggles by decreeing that "the production of representational art...provides confirmation that the becoming [hu]man of the Word of God was real and not just imaginary. ...Indeed, the honor paid to an image traverses it, reaching the model, and the one who venerates the image, venerates the person represented in that image."

So what? Is this just a matter of church décor, or aesthetic pleasure? My point in this little essay is to argue quite the contrary: that in fact veneration of ikons, far from being an extra, is as central to what it means to be "orthodox" as the name of the Sunday implies. I want to look at this from two angles. First, why are ikons important in how we relate to one another as human beings and as followers of Christ? Secondly, how do they relate to idolatry, a sing that we rarely discuss these days but which is, I hope to suggest, very much alive all around us. (But maybe not in the ways you may be thinking.) Let me take them in reverse order.

What is an idol? Is it just a "graven image" pure and simple? Let us look at a famous passage from Psalm 115 (it appears in almost the same words in Psalm 135), speaking of images of silver and gold: "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not. They have hands but they handle not: feel have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that

make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them (KJV)." The last verse is the kicker: an idol *is* an idol because of its relation to its worshipper, which is based on similarity. Why are "they that make them like unto them?" Easy enough — because they make the idols in their own image, the better to control and manipulate them. Worship of idols is simply worship of oneself and of one's comfortable understanding of "how the world works."

I remember, as an 11-year-old in Japan who went to school with the children of US and Canadian Protestant missionaries, being shown a 1964 calendar with ravishing photographs of Japanese gardens, accompanied with equally appalling captions pointing out that the people who built them did so for idolatrous purposes and thus to the damnation of their souls. (That, at least, is how I remember it.) For many years thereafter I wanted nothing to do with Christian belief. I would now almost be willing, if it were not for little voices urging me to be more charitable, to say the missionaries were worshipping an idol, not the builders of the Buddhist temple gardens in Kyoto.

Still, without reflecting on persons, I do believe Biblical literalism of the kind that calendar demonstrated is an idol. One proof may be the constant fragmenting of those who worship it into warring sects, which is the very opposite of what I think the Church is meant to be: not a gated community for the pure but a hospital for sinners.

Some of the idols worshipped daily in our culture are not graven images at all. The "free market" is an example. "Progress" is another, if by that is meant the idea that "every day in every way we're getting better and better," with no losers but only gainers. I would say that the nuclear family, which is being called the "traditional" family through its history is way too short to be much of a tradition, yet is another. I could go on for some time (perhaps I shall, in another article). Readers can no doubt come up with their own examples.

What does this have to do with ikons. If worshipping an idol is meant to turn us back on ourselves, so that we can take satisfaction how good we are, venerating an ikon, praying before it, is meant to do just the opposite. The old description of ikons as "windows in heaven" emphasizes this. Gazing into the face of the Savior, the Mother of God, or a favorite saint draws our attention outward. It invites communion between the figure in the ikon and the one standing before it.

Of course, an artistically crafted "idol" could do the same thing. This is where the theological rationale for ikons turns out to be important. Praying before an ikon, as opposed to worshipping an idol, transforms us precisely because it declares before all our belief in the Incarnation. More than that, by drawing us into our communion with Our Lord or a favorite saint, or into

meditation on an event in sacred history, an ikon, unlike an idol, has the power to shape *us* in *its* image. Thus we can say that an idol is a perverted ikon, an ikon turned inside out.

One final proposition underlies the emphasis Holy Tradition places on ikons. If we can venerate an ikon *because* (and this is precisely what the Council says) it reminds us that the Incarnation was “real and not imaginary,” then it forces us to take seriously the real humanity, including the embodiment, of all the other ikons of Christ we see walking around every time we go down the street. If not, our veneration of ikons is in fact idolatrous. To adapt a point made by St. John Chrysostom, there are ikons in church, beautiful ones which we bow before and kiss and illuminate with oil, and there are ikons we are more likely to ignore, if not actively spurn: the poor begging on the steps of the Church as we go out after venerating the pretty ikons inside. The panhandler too is an ikon of Christ. So are all the other human beings we encounter. Can we see the Image of God there, or only in an ancient Byzantine painted wood panel? Will we be prepared to wash those feet, as we kiss those of the painted image? Or, to use a more Western comparison, are we as willing to put clothing on a naked homeless person as we are to dress the statue of the infant of Prague? Nowadays we are apt to scoff at such customs as superstitious. I submit that dressing the statue reminds us to think of people’s need for clothes, and perhaps to put our needs to work for human beings.

Ikons and idols are mirrors of each other. They are also mirrors in which we can, if we dare, look closely at ourselves.

Our beliefs and our practices have consequences. Refusing to look Jesus in the face, refusing even to consider that Jesus had a body, tempts us to think that the Incarnation was “imaginary”. Making printed words on the pages of a book the only arbiter of orthodoxy allows us to ignore the implications of the teachings drawn from those pages for human beings, especially the most socially marginalized — in short, to construct an idol and put it in place of a living Church, a Body of Christ, in which we have to rub shoulders with people not like us, people who disagree with us, who annoy us, who argue with us, who challenge us, who embarrass us.

Taking ikons seriously, by contrast, understanding them as public professions of our belief that God really lived in our human bodies, opens us to each

other. Of course, that make sour lives less safe and secure than the gated community of fundamentalist belief. But it also moves us nearer to the divinization of *theosis* that is our Orthodox understanding of Jesus’ saving work. Venerating the ikons can start us on that journey.

After Word

This is the second issue of *The Orthodox American*. I understand it is the third life of a communication publication with this title, though I have not seen the earlier incarnations of TOA. Its inauguration was the idea of the Holy Synod of Bishops following a recommendation by Bishop Doug Wright of New England. Collectively and individually, the Bishops know the importance of communion within the jurisdiction. Communion and unity. Those are concepts you will hear a great deal about in the future.

I am delighted to give the leadership for this journal into the hands of three talented OCCA members, Father Ralph Curtis, Father Kevin Kearney, and Mother Francesca Fortunato. (Notice they are listed alphabetically.) They comprise the Editorial Team which will produce TOA. From them you will receive information about deadlines and circulation. Each is highly talented and each enjoys writing and does so well. Thanks to all of them for accepting this huge responsibility.

You will also notice that Father Jim Brigl has accepted the task of preparing for our Jubilee Synod of 2010. Jim will be recruiting others to help with the planning, and you can expect to be polled as to your interests for the Synod — including whether it might be best to hold regional gatherings due to the economy.

Accompanying this issue is a memorial card for Archbishop Skip Carsten. The photograph was one of his favorites, taken at Lake Michigan several years ago. We can’t see his face anymore, but we see that he is looking outward, as Skip always did. On the back is one of his favorite liturgical prayers.

And last but not least, I want to thank Archbishop Alfred Lankenau for the leadership he provided as our *locum tenens*. There were several hot issues he had to deal with during his tenure, so it wasn’t a quiet period. He assures me that he is happy to be once again in retirement.

Blessings and peace to all!