

The Orthodox American

Witnessing the Spirit, in the West

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Looking Forward

Foreword:

When Mary encountered the risen Christ at the empty tomb, his first words to her were, "Do not be afraid." In this article by Bishop Douglas Wright, Bishop of New England, we have an excellent example of how courage is faith in action. All of us have similar stories about using the courage born of faith to confront words and behaviors that hurt people. This is one story you want to read, clip, hang on the fridge, and share with friends.

Anyone who spends more than 30 minutes with members of our little household of faith knows this: we speak about justice and peace in both our official statements and more importantly in the way we live our lives. It has been said that discrimination against gay people is the last legitimate prejudice. Whatever its ranking, such discrimination is wrong, and I am touched by Bishop Doug's bravery and advocacy. I am also renewed in my determination to be an advocate.

The vote in Maine did not turn out the way Bishop Doug and the supporters of the state's marriage equality law would have hoped. The story hasn't ended, though. History is not on

the side of the nay-sayers; though, I will admit, it would be nice to have a tad more of the Heavenly Kingdom already here in my lifetime!

His article, "Looking Forward," was originally published by the Lincoln County Publishing Company, and is reprinted with permission.

Archbishop Peter

I thought that I would be remembered, if at all, as the flamboyant community theater director, but I will actually be remembered for my stories of the old days and the old ways, the happy days, mostly family and school oriented. Not everything about the old days was good and once in a while it is worth raking over old coals to settle the pile, if you will. In the old days, it was ok to get drunk and beat your family. What a man did in his own castle was no one's business. As a pastor, I have heard children excuse their parent, "He did mean it, he was drunk." Hughie and I saw some of it too. Our Uncle Al K. Hall was never far away. But for me the worst thing to live with and pray to God no one ever found out, was the fact that I knew I was attracted to John and not Jane, and my church said it was evil and of the devil. This was before gay liberation and all over the country young people had to deal alone with the knowledge that they were born different from their brothers and sisters. Alone they had to face the disapproval of their parents, their siblings, their church folks, they had to listen to the fag jokes told by their friends, had to deal with the every present possibility of being outed and disgraced and even beaten.

Unless it has happened to you, you will never know what it is like to be a nice Christian boy who can't hide the fact that he is sissy acting. In some ways it was worse for the gay kids who could pass for straight for they had to

laugh with their unsuspecting friends at jokes aimed at themselves. It is awful to have to pushing loving children away for fear of what folks might think. I remember a cast party at the Cheechako for our production of 'Oliver.' This was during the Anita Bryant persecutions, and I had written in the program of my gratitude to the parents who trusted me with their children during the rehearsals for this show. We had some 28 kids in this show and were having a wonderful party. Robby Dwyer, who played the Artful Dodger, representing the kids present me with a cast gift from them all and I received it with big smiles as these kids and their parents looked on and then Robby bent down and kissed me right on the mouth! I was startled and unnerved, totally thrown into a fright and instant guilt as if I had done something wrong. It was irrational I know, but it shows how deep into one's personality is ingrained the fear of being labeled a child molester. It is awful that some folks equate homosexuals with child molesters despite all the evidence to the contrary, worst of all is the knowledge that some will never change their minds.

Those who have read my book know how I resolved my problems with the fundamentalists and moved on with my life. When I first moved to Damariscotta and was living alone in our house on the Biscay Road while my partner served in the Navy, one night I was listening to WGAN's evening talk show that had as a guest a fundamentalist minister from Bangor. The Rev. Herman 'Buddy' Frankland, who was railing against gays (this was during the debates concerning decriminalizing homosexual behavior) and after listening to his rant for an hour or more I couldn't stand it and telephoned in and asked the host how long was he going to let this fool run down gay people, this was 1967. I was invited to debate Rev. Frankland the following Friday evening, but he didn't show and I ended up on the radio for two hours taking phone calls and answering our critics. I thought that probably clinched our reputation among Damariscotta folks, they already called us the odd couple, but to my amazement I got favorable comments from an astounding variety of Damariscotta folks. Not all were so supportive. During our first two years in Scotty, we had our house set afire, had

three dogs poisoned, discovered 'Faggots' painted on the side of our house in two foot letters. We also regularly received obscene phone calls. So I paid dearly for sticking my neck out and challenging the prevailing wisdom. Our Damariscotta took a better turn when I got involved with the theater at Lincoln Academy. I will always be grateful to Arthur Dexter and the Lincoln faculty of those days for their support, a testament that knowledge always wins out over ignorance. I remember with special fondness the many wonderful teenagers I worked with in school plays and in community theater. They are the ones who calmed their friends and parents about working with the gay director, they are the ones who made life easier for Erik and me, and I am proud and grateful to still have many of them as friends as adults. The truth is: I fell in love with them by the dozens, both boys and girls and worked my head off in their best interests. But so, I am told, do all good teachers.

This recent debate about Gay marriage has harrowed the ground of my self esteem all over again and while it has exasperated me in some ways, (ignorance always wears me out) I can't tell how amazed I am at the large number of letters from a wide variety of folks, nearly all of them heterosexual, support equal rights for gay people in all areas of community life. They actually manned phone banks! They took out a full page ad in the 'News.' I am especially grateful for so many intelligent and carefully thought out letters urging a No vote on Question 1 written by folks from all walks of life. Never in my most optimistic fantasies did I dream that I would live to see not one, but two full page ads in the Lincoln County News supporting gay people! Whatever the outcome of the election, may now in my white haired years, I can stop being wary of straight folks. It will be hard to break this habit, please pray for me.

Bishop Douglas Wright

Round'n About

Notes from the Dioceses & Vicariates

Albuquerque

Western Great Lakes and the OCCA Pastoral Theology Institute

Bishop David Kotajarvi: To begin this update credit is given where credit is due. First, one of my students, Elizabeth Rocque, took the time to guide me into the world of the spreadsheet and get the library listing started. After her guidance I managed to input nearly 1,000 holdings. Second, the document was sent to Fr. Cliff in rough, but acceptable shape. The wizard then polished the document into its' final form. I had no idea that the listing would be molded and shaped into the professional document that it now is. Fr. Cliffs' efforts are greatly appreciated.

Several members of clergy have contacted me and offered to share their knowledge with others. God bless you all. I will send the institute document to any others interested in either teaching a course, or taking a course. We have so much talent out there, that once we get moving, it is going to be exciting to watch the institute activity enriching the skills and minds of our clergy. Please volunteer, if you haven't already.

I recently spent time at Crosswood and spoke with our church family "down there". There are some with health issues. Please pray for them. Bishop Vince recently spent some time in the hospital and is now home. I am thankful that he recovered so quickly. He gave Kris' ta quite a scare. Vicar Donn and those in Chicago are doing well, although we said farewell to Br. Michael Oboza as he has decided to take a different path in his ministry. There will be an ordination in Madison on May 8, 2010. Nancy Toubl will be ordained a deacon at Fr. Doug Smiths' home. She comes to us with significant theological education and a strong desire to serve. Some may remember her from the installation ceremony.

Peace and the blessings of the Holy Trinity be with you all.

Chicago

Vicar Donn Mielke: On November 22nd, 2009 the Rt. Rev Father James A Wilkowski, Bishop of the Diocese of the Northwest, invited Vicar Donn to con celebrate with him and the "Holy Family Parish Evangelical Catholic Church. At the Church of the Atonement, we celebrated the

Incardination of a long time priest friend of many years. Together with Br. Mathew of St Thomas, we all shared the Liturgy and fellowship.

New England

Bishop Douglas Wright: +Douglas announced the promotion of Father Peter Bals to the rank of Archimandrite and appointment to post of chaplain to the Bishop and Dean of the Cathedral Church.

Bishop Wright and Father Bals are planning a large image of Christ Triumphant with Mary, John the Baptist, and Apostles. Father Bals is a trained artist and iconographer and has had training in fresco, painting on wet plaster.

Bishop Wright reported that progress continues on his building. Completed tasks include the installation of a 95% efficiency propane boiler, which due to the design and insulation used in construction of the church only needed to be half the size usually needed for such a size building. The work for heating the building was due to a very generous donation of \$11,400 for the boiler and \$1,500 for propane.

New York and the Atlantic Coast

Bishop Elizabeth Walker: The last three months have been very good, in that the NYC parish community of St John has moved and settled-in at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Saviour's Atonement in upper Manhattan. We've received a couple of enquiries since our arrival in mid-October, and seen some new faces. In October, Bishop Elizabeth represented the OCCA at the consecration of Julius Licata in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for an Old Catholic jurisdiction. In November, seminarian John Yoegel was set aside as a reader and subdeacon; and he continues his studies with Bp Elizabeth and the NYC parish.

A couple of quick updates: To the north, despite the snow, Father Barry Lillis continues his ministries throughout Western New York. We welcome the return to the OCCA and to active ministry of Father Matthias Moore in South Carolina. Father Lyndal Lee is currently working in NYC and "weekending" back home in Atlanta, hopefully enjoying a bit

warmer weather than in New York. Father Jim Brigl is busy, not just with parish and secular employment, but in the important business of working with the Metropolitan and the OCCA Centennial Synod Planning Committee.

Great Plains

The Pacific Coast

Bishop James Gleeson: From the Pacific Coast Diocese comes a hearty and sincere wish for abundant blessings on our Savior's birth and for a joyous New Year. I look forward to seeing you all at the general synod this summer and by that time to also celebrate a renewed prosperous economy.

Bishop Jerry Hegarty is rebounding after a bout with the flu and other bugs and is now in good running shape and ready for anything coming his way. The good bishop certainly carries his weight on this coast.

Father Ralph Curtis has completed another successful year in his prison ministry with the annual Christmas celebration of Eucharist in three Protective Custody dorms and giving communion to some 250 inmates. As in the past, his holiday card project at local churches saw some 175 cards mailed to inmates giving them a little share of the holiday. He continues to be a great support of the Church in his publishing craft and his coordinating of services at the local as well as state levels.

Mother Deacon Annie French will complete the necessary instruction and inquiry for the sacrament of Baptism for two aspirants this month. She has handled every step for these candidates for this wonderful initiation into Christ's service. Good work Mother Annie.

Father Richard Parker requested and was granted retirement status after years of hard work in the fields of Christ. We rejoice in his work in the Church. A retirement ceremony is planned for this summer.

Mother Laura Emerson continues in her calling to care for the needs of her ailing friend, just as Father Michael Cabler attends to his charge. Both are bringing their charges back to health with loving care.

Father Basil Donadio continues his work at the Veterans Hospital carrying out the

corporal works of mercy along with other spiritual works he has defined as his apostolate. Father Basil recently studied the works and exercises of the eastern monks and incorporated these disciplines into his work to bring peace to himself and others.

Recently I attended a convocation of thirty denominations in the State Capital and made fruitful contact with various communities and engaged more than a few in correspondence. In discussion, I found that the Orthodox are not understood and are regarded with significant prejudice, some deserved but others that need updating and clarification. I feel that we truly have a mission to announce our presence in the Orthodox/Catholic field and need to give a more enlightened and hopeful presentation in our jurisdictions. I am encouraged by the inquiry and sincerity shown in our dialogue.

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Peter's Two Pence

And the Last Trumpet will Sound

The end of the church year and beginning of Liturgical Year 2010 brought forth preachers with their favorite calls to repentance. It is time for the Lord to return in glory, they told us, and so we all should be prepared. At the movie theatre, an end-of-days film is drawing huge crowds to Hollywood's vision of how the world will end in 2012. There is a place for eschatology, to be sure, but one which calls for more individual involvement than the earth caving open to swallow whole cities. There are echoes of Gabriel's trumpet in the decorations of Christmas, when it seems that everyone breaks

out in exuberant display, rich music, and delicious foods. It is with this holiday trumpet that I think we Christian folk are best guided into the way of peace, reconciliation, and readiness for Christ when he returns.

For as golden and shiny and oversized the holiday trumpets are, they are, in the final measure, celebrating an event in time—or more precisely, in many times. They recall the angel songs over Bethlehem two millennia ago, but they sound for us today, announcing the Prince of Peace to us, in our time, in our neighborhood, in our own lives. Look around you. Be attentive. You will find trumpets everywhere. They sound for you, and invite you to connect.

In the windows of Chartres Cathedral, in France, tall, lancet windows in the south transept show the four evangelists sitting on the shoulders of four major prophets of the Hebrew Bible. A trumpet that reminds the viewer of the continuity of a believing life from generation to generation.

In the churches of the place where you live are paintings and sculptures of saints—all kinds of them, in astonishing variety. Each a trumpet sounding the invitation to see something else than with our quotidian vision.

Here, my neighbors decorate their balcony with so many things that we sometimes jest that the lights probably serve as an airplane beacon. A trumpet that reminds me that the Christmas season is of extravagant assertions and extravagant responses from believers.

In a large Midwestern city, a huge Santa Claus display, originally created in the 1940s and lovingly restored, draws thousands of moms and dads with their children. What is Santa? A symbol of the spendthrift season? Hardly. Rather, a trumpet which invites us all to be generous in the deadness of winter's cold and overcast time.

The communion cup of coffee and the pastry you share with a friend on break: another trumpet announcing the sovereignty of God in everyday experiences and the persistence of friendship and connections.

The sounding of Gabriel's *last* trumpet clearly implies a symphony of countless trumpets sounding throughout history. As we begin AD 2010, commit to listening and watching for trumpets which announce the

incremental coming of the Kingdom of God, the reign of Christ, the time, that beautiful, enigmatic, magical time of the Lamb who was slain but now lives and who sets for us a table, and smiles and beckons us home. The end time isn't to be awaited passively, dear companions in ministry. We actively work to make ourselves more a more humanely human by striving to be hopeful, reconciling, socially responsible, and we do that when we respond to the everyday trumpets.

Archbishop Peter

Looking Ahead to 4 Projects for Early 2010

The Chancery Office has several projects in the works. They will be rolled out for the jurisdiction in the first quarter of 2010, according to Archbishop Peter.

The first is the 2010 Budget for the jurisdiction. To anyone's recollection, this is the first time in at least a decade that a formal budget will be prepared. Based on the pledges individual members were asked to return in December, the budget will itemize projected expenditures for various departments and the National Synod. If members have not yet returned their Cathedral Fund Pledge, they are asked to do so very soon.

Secondly, the Archbishop, with the help of the Liturgy Committee, has begun a series of pastoral letters on worship. There is no timetable for each of the Letters, but the first will appear in January 2010 and address the variety of traditions of vestments used by members of the jurisdiction.

And the third project is a pastoral letter on monasticism in OCCA. Our jurisdiction is in the vanguard of redefining monastic living for the 21st century. The Pastoral Letter will report on a recent self survey by the monastics of OCCA and propose some actions for the future.

Finally, the national website has received praise for its accessibility and the ease with which individuals can find it. At the same time, it has been faulted for being static. A research group is studying ways to make our website more dynamic. The intention is to not reinvent the wheel, but to make the wheel more

effective and comfortable for those who use the site.

Goals for 2010

Bishop David Kotajarvi

As 2009 becomes a memory of those we have lost, loved, and respected I ask for your indulgence for a moment or two.

I see our church community still a bit dazed by all that has transpired. I believe that is healthy, but we do have to look beyond the past and set goals for ourselves and for our church. Please allow me to share my goals for 2010 with respect to serving the Lord.

I will encourage more of our talented clergy to assist those entering the Lord's service in their preparation and improving their abilities. I will offer a training video of a western and eastern Divine Liturgy. I will travel as often as I can to share in the Lord's banquet with those in the diocese. I will give generously to the cathedraticum. I will devote more time to prayer and communicating with the wonderful people of the diocese and elsewhere in our church.

I will endeavor to be an example of humility, kindness, and compassion to all. I will enthusiastically contribute as much effort as I can to enable our church to grow and meet the needs of all it serves.

It is my goal that we all love one another, pray for one another, accept one another, respect one another, help one another, and that we all offer our Metropolitan Archbishop Peter our promise to serve with renewed vigor and love.

Peace and Love to all

Footnotes in History

The Celtic Tonsure

The unique tonsure is, of all the Celtic customs, the most obscure in origin. Claimed to have come from St John, the tonsure was a triangle with a straight line shaved across the crown of the head from ear to ear. From each ear the shaved pattern went up toward the forehead and met in a point. Seen from above, it was a triangle pointing toward the face rather than the Latin circle.

It is suggested that the "triangular" tonsure was the ancient Antiochene tonsure which, like elements of that liturgy, had disappeared in the centers of Christianity, and survived only at the margins, among the isolated Celts.

The Celtic tonsure was the most contentious for Romans. Unlike the differences in calendar and liturgy the tonsure was seen daily, up front in the Romans' face. The triangular tonsure was first condemned by the 4th Council of Toledo.

Opinions and Viewpoints

A forum for discussion

Working in the Vineyard

"God is Good..." – is a phrase used often by Br. Michael C. Oboza. While in the OCCA at St Thomas Mission, he proved to be a very active "Activist". He wrote: "I asked God what I was born to do. God spoke to me through a play I was invited to by a man sick and dying. Even though, I heard of the loss of Matthew Shepard, I went to a play titled "Brent." Br Oboza knew then, "My calling was to be a *Rassophore* monk." Having received the 'Morning and Evening Prayer' book issued at the Bishop & Vicar Synod, Br Oboza continued in his letter, "Each day begins in solitude. We still our minds to prepare for Morning Prayer. We share Morning Prayer. We share God's compassion in civil activism. We have and continue to help feed the hungry, clothe the poor in winter, educate others by reading with them, find people shelter and live the light of God's love all the time without question. After our day ends, we go back to the stillness and prepare for Evening Prayer. After prayer, we share another Psalm reading. We reflect on the Psalm. We end the day in song. Last song we shared was "There Is a Balm in Gilead."

Br. Michael, ministered to the "Straight and Gay Alliance" which he founded over ten year ago. In addition, he spoke on the 3rd Step (of action) during the 'Gospel Recovery Jubilee' at The Center for New Possibilities and was spotlight speaker at "Fear No Fashion" for the PAVE Organization to help prevent sexual violence in schools; he was often published in many of the Gay News papers. A phrase he wrote that hit a home run was, "There are people

who still degrade bisexual people as going through a phase. As if to judge one of the apostles (as they) are going through a gospel phase."

One of the best evenings that Br Oboza recalled was his joy at meeting Bishop Elizabeth (Lynn Walker) during a Health Summit in Chicago. From Friday through Tuesday Br. Michael shared Morning Prayer with 36+ people at the Continental Breakfast at the Health Summit. He also spoke at a Bible workshop that later was followed by meeting to work on "Hate -crimes". The same evening, Br. Michael answered a phone call at two o'clock AM, from a torn and conflicted young man. Hearing a gun shot in the background, he reflected on Psalm 46.10 "Be still..." Finally meeting with the distressed young man, Br Michael walked and talked with him, convincing him to go to a clinic where the young man was saved and is "One less" dead child of God.

St. Thomas Mission and I will miss Br. Michael as he moves to MCC to expand his ministry of help. Our Monastic director and I spent many hours helping Br. Michael decide on moving from the Western to the Eastern as a novice professing as a *Rassophore* monk. Although he has been released as a brother under the guidance of the OCCA, I reminded him that Br Oboza is still a brother (monk) in the service of our Lord.

About the Cathedricum

So long as humans have believed in a power greater than themselves, they have also felt the necessity to make offerings, to give of their own in recognition of that higher presence.

'Bring forth . . . tithes and offerings. Test me on this,' says God almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven our pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'

Malachi 3.10

Could the need and the privilege be made any clearer than this, the one verse in all scriptures where it is not only permissible to test God, but we are actually called to do so. It would seem, it appears to me, that obviously God has made a point here of clear importance.

Of course giving of ourselves and the fruits of our labors is difficult. We all work hard

for what we have. Our giving might be nothing more than proof of our belief, but according to the verse in Malachi, it is more. It is an expression of our faith in God's abundance and our own place in God's grace.

In it is an inherent promise that God will give to each more than is needed and each will then return part of the surplus in gratitude and to further God's work. My experience has been that God's blessings are readily found so long as we are open to something more than the material, things like wisdom, discernment, faith, love and the like. It is clear to the writers of scripture saw the reality of how the world moved and the necessity that God's work be supported. While Christ, as St Paul wrote, exempted us from the Law, we are nonetheless bound to its spirit. So I say, let's explore the full scope of God's blessings by testing God on this score. What's the risk, after all God said to do just that.

Few institutions, even churches rely only on Spirit-led giving for financial support and so we are called to pledge. Our pledges are an exercise of faith manifested as a budget so our funding may be freely used as God leads. In doing so, we demonstrate our confidence, our trust in God to provide.

Jesus spoke clearly that the individual's attitude towards money demonstrated which master is served, "You cannot serve both God and Money." God supplies our needs and our focus should be on God and not money. While God is not opposed to possessions, still the lesson is that we should invest where there is the greatest security, 'where there is neither rust, nor moth, nor thief,' nor recessionary cycles.

In the same sense that testing God will show an abundance of blessing, it is written, 'It is more blessed to give than receive,' a further assurance that giving is closely allied to our own generosity.

'Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.' **Romans 12.13**

So wrote St. Paul, not in commandment, but expressing the spirit of the law, advising us in ministry as yet a further aspect of giving not just to God, but within the people of God so as a community, we may alleviate need.

'As we have sown spiritual among you, is it too much if there is a material harvest reaped?'

1 Corinthians 9.11

'As I testify, they gave all they were able, and beyond that. It was entirely of their own.'

2 Corinthians 8.3

When Paul wrote these words, he was not writing to people of great wealth and influence, who had much to spare, but those 'of the most severe trial' and of 'extreme poverty.' Yet they responded joyfully, beyond their means and this Paul holds up to us as an example of genuine giving, an example that shows that all can manage something. It is a challenge to live by faith, not sight as pleasing to God, **2 Corinthians 5.7 & Hebrews 11.6.**

We are also called to give as they gave, joyfully, 'Remember, whoever sows grudgingly will also reap grudgingly, but those who sow generously will also reap generously. So each should give what is decided in their own heart to give, not reluctantly nor under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'

2 Corinthians 9.6-7

And so, we are asked to pledge generously, 'In this way, they lay up treasure as a firm foundation for the coming age, so they may grasp life that is truly life.' **1 Timothy 6.19.** As St. John wrote, 'Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions, in truth.' **1 John 3.18**

So, I say, test God and receive the promised blessings even as we lay up treasure, this age cannot touch, for the age yet to come.

Bishop James Gleeson

The Orthodox American

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