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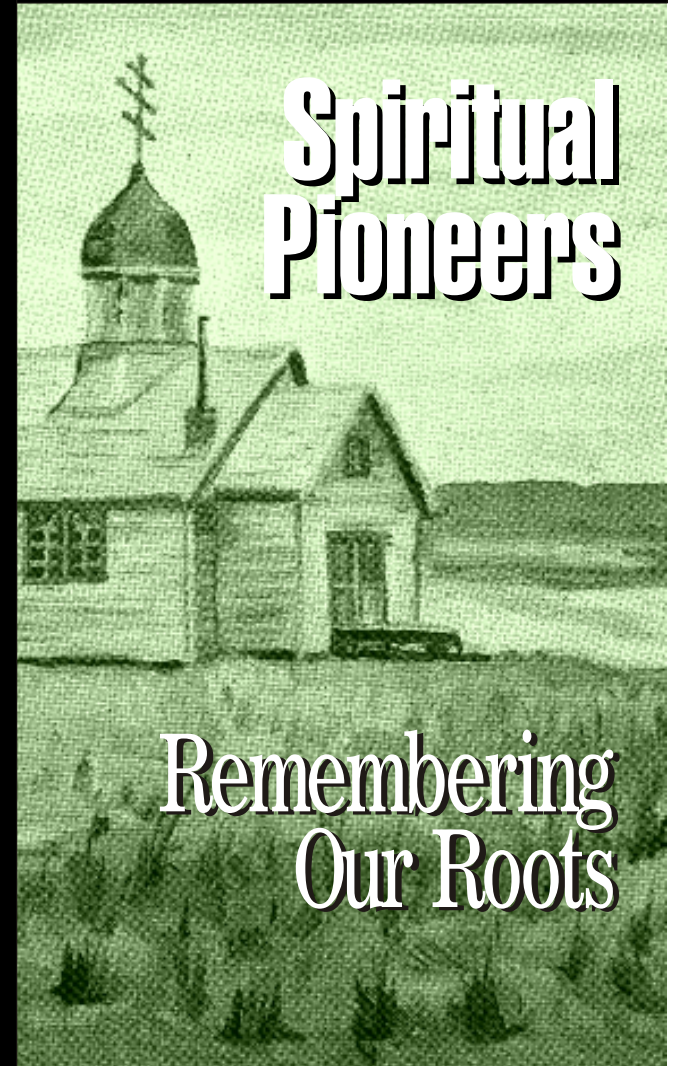
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FROM THE EDITOR

Knowing Who We Are

There is an old saying that the man who does not know his roots, does not know who he is.

So it is with the life of a Christian. Father Alexander Schmemman once wrote that an essential part of Orthodox life is remembrance: we learn the path we must walk by considering the path taken by the holy ones of previous ages. Indeed, this is the measure of the Orthodox Faith: what has been done everywhere, always, and by all, to recall the words of Saint Vincent of Lerins.

We live in strange times. Father Seraphim Rose called our times the era of "weirdness", and so they are. Having cut ourselves loose from the moorings of the past, we now try to understand ourselves from a world that is spinning around us – a world that doesn't know which way it is headed, either.

It was inspiring to have the opportunity to speak in the past months with the archivist of the Canadian Orthodox Archives, Katya Szalasznyj, and to hear her remarkable recollections of real life and real faith in the lives of ordinary people on the Canadian prairies. We are blessed in this issue of Orthodox Canada to share some of those recollections with our readers, and hopefully to inspire each of us to dig deeper into our own Orthodox Christian roots.

Father Geoffrey Korz+
Managing Editor

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PRAIRIE VOICES

An interview with Katya Szalasznyj

Katya Szalasznyj is the Co-ordinator of the Canadian Orthodox Archives, a noted historian on Orthodox life in Canada, with a particular interest in the Canadian prairies. In this interview, conducted in late summer 2008, Katya shares with Orthodox Canada her personal recollections of spiritual life on the prairies.

Orthodox Canada (OC): I know you have some remarkable memories of church life on the prairies growing up. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about that.

Katya Szalasznyj (KS): First of all, you're most welcomed! We've pursued this interview for quite a while before we actually managed to bring it to fruition. Here we are at last!

OC: Good things take time.

KS: My memories of church life growing up... I was born in 1952 in what I call the Eastern Townships of Saskatchewan, which is Canora, Yorkton, the Parkland region there that runs right to the

Manitoba border. I grew up in a pocket of Saskatchewan that was extremely rural. We had a large lake, now called Good Spirit Lake (it had various names over the years including Kitchimanitou and others), and this lake – three miles by nine miles – was just to the west of our farm.

I must say first of all, that lake was always for me a point of – if the word is, it was extremely eschatological, or end-times oriented, because when I was small, I believed that that was the end of the world!

OC: Where the world actually ended?

KS: Where the world actually ended! And once you pass that lake to the west there was nothing. So I always felt that we lived on the edge of the world.

OC: So Alberta was beyond the edge of the world?

KS: I didn't know about Alberta when I was small.(laughs)
Everything ended at Good Spirit Lake!

There was this pocket of Bukovinians and Galicians that had taken over quite a bit of Doukhobor land (which is my other side, my mother's side being Doukhobor), when the Doukhobors lost their land in 1907 to the McDougall Commission, and Peter Vergin took them off to B.C. to live in colonies there. So I grew up on what was a Doukhobor homesteaders' log house, which now Ukrainians – my great grandfather, Ignat Danyluk (Ignatius is, I think, the actual name) – he came when he was over sixty to Canada, with his sons, bringing even his very, very old mother ... the tombstone says she was born in 1834. She is buried in the family cemetery there, on our farm. She died in 1927.

So this pocket of Ukrainian settlers had good intentions. They donated land for a cemetery, they built a bell tower, but they never

built a church. They instead made a school, so there was a school adjoining a cemetery.

OC: What did they do for their spiritual life? How did they...

KS: For their spiritual life, it seems they relied quite a lot on our predecessor OCA (Orthodox Church in America) missionaries. They would travel when somebody was in the district, they would go and have their marriages, their baptisms, just like a lot of pioneers did. They knew a priest was coming, so they save all of their needs until such time that they could go.

And so, my earliest years, church life was very sporadic. It was almost, I would say, more about funerals that were taking place and burials taking place in the cemetery right on our farm, out where this donated land was. There were weddings occasionally, but actually to be a church attender, my parents did not belong to any formal congregation, until much later in life.

OC: Your concept of parish membership was something that came much later.

KS: Much later. But in the meantime, what came was this strong feeling that – as I say, the lake created this “end of the world” feeling – and also, we had this extreme mindfulness of death, because even as schoolchildren, we’d be sitting in our prairie school with twelve students in it, and we knew that there was a neighbour’s funeral going to happen in the afternoon, and all of a sudden you would hear the bell from the belltower tolling that they were all arriving. Then the teacher would very seriously ask us all to jump the fence to the cemetery, and they allowed the children a last viewing, where they would open the casket and we would file by to see the neighbour. Generally, the funeral service was with all the neighbours.

You’d have neighbours who passed away with the dirt of their gardens still under their nails. And then you got a bun and an orange in remembrance of the person, and you went back to your school desk and you carefully ate it.

OC: A bun and an orange?

KS: Yes, it’s still the tradition on the prairies. I was just yesterday at what they call the Provodi, visiting the graves at this time of Paschal season. I was at that church cemetery just yesterday. I went out – it’s where my father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and that intriguing relative Anna Choban, born 1834, where she is buried. It’s a family cemetery -- it’s an Orthodox one, a field in the open.



So somehow all of this mixed together in my childhood, this sense of an end, that we have to think about our end, and also the Creator and all the beauty of Creation. Because being raised on one square mile of land, and going to town only sporadically was very, very rural, and very, very nature-oriented.

OC: I’m intrigued by the bun and the orange. Was there symbolism to the bun and the orange?

KS: Yes. Well, it’s what they began to do. It’s been since the 1950s that they always give that out at least, but in my time I know (it was) a bun and an orange. The bun is like almost a little kolach, a little bread, and the orange, again, I’m not sure, but I think oranges were rare in the prairie days, and they wanted to give

something good. Because even the bowls they make, these *pomenalniie*, remembrance bowls, they always have fruit in them.

OC: Tell me about those.

KS: Oh well, I saw several yesterday, and they were always in this day and age made the same way. They put cookies, fruit, candies, it's topped by a candle, and then when the priest prays for the departed, he blesses that, and that is what is taken around to everybody in remembrance of so-and-so.

OC: There's a remarkable similarity to a Chinese custom.

KS: Oh, interesting! And then, one of the earliest ones I remember was when my great-grandmother died, she was ninety-two and looked like a little wax doll in her casket, and at hers they had – it was like a *kutya* (boiled wheat used at remembrance prayer services), similar to what the Romanians and others make. It was wheat *kutya* with candies in it, and it was at the back of the church with one spoon, and everybody going up took a spoonful and kept going! So there was no concept of germs and all of this – everybody had that one spoon, and that was it!

OC: We live in luxury now, with one spoon per person.

KS: I know. But it wasn't like that. The other memory that was very strong for me was the first funeral I ever saw, and I stood in front of his tombstone yesterday, it was my Ukrainian



grandmother's brother, Yuriy Aleksiuik, and I was sure I was at least four going on five when he died. I remember that they opened the casket, and there was the final viewing and prayers, and then they lowered the casket. And I remember being there and saying, "Why are they putting this man in the ground?" And when I see the date, he died in 1955, so I was only three – three and a little bit. I can picture it like today.

And so those things all kind of figure in... it was kind of a sombre upbringing, combined with the Doukhobor side, where the songs are very, very soul-wrenching., and many are about the future and the coming of Christ. So the two heritages came together.

OC: Did the Dukhobor upbringing have an apocalyptic side?

KS: Oh yes, yes! One of the hymns that my grandmother taught us, she used to teach us for chocolate bars. She would have a pile of chocolate bars and she would seat us all in a line and make us sing Doukhobor hymns, and if we sang, we got the chocolate. So by age five we were singing songs like, "*Vot Christos K Nam Idyot, I Nam Radost' Prenisyot*" – meaning, "Christ is coming, bringing us joy".

OC: And you would memorize these for chocolate bars?

KS: Yes! She had a strong sense of what made kids tick. (laughter)

OC: Was there an interplay between the life of the Doukhobors and the life of the Orthodox?

KS: You know the Doukhobors are so Orthodox in many respects, they just don't know it. Many of their prayers are psalms, various prayers out of Orthodox books, they confess the Resurrection, they say "Christos Voskres" (Christ is Risen) all year long.

OC: Like Saint Seraphim of Sarov.

KS: Yes. Their prayers end and they say “*Chrisos Voskres*”, and they answer “*Vo Istino Voskres*” (Indeed He Is Risen). Their way of doing things, their homes, their houses, while they don’t have holy images, their life is so earthy, so natural. One of my joys was being in my Baba’s (grandmother’s) summer kitchen, and she was boiling a whole copper boiler full of beets. And what does she give the grandchildren? She fished out some beets and buttered them, so we had hot, buttered beets, in her summer kitchen.

Or going to the bathhouse, the bania. We did that at least a few times in our lives, with her and my mother. All of those memories. The Doukhor memories in the long run... if you picture a pastel work of art – it blends with the Orthodox ones. You cannot separate them all so much as the words “Doukhor” and “Orthodox” imply. It’s totally different when you live it.

OC: It’s quite a contrast to urban life, even on the prairies.

KS: Oh, it is. And I could not adjust to urban life when I came in 1970 to University. Having been raised on this square mile of land, and with our old cow pastures and paths, and just knowing that God made all that. My father was a big influence, because he to the end of his days marvelled that the Creator could make something; you put a seed in the ground, and the seed brings yield.

Yesterday with the priest at this *Provodi* (memorial service), we sat outside the little prairie school (now turned into a church) – it’s not registered, it’s only used once a year...

OC: The same school?

KS: The same school exists, with the light still shining in the same way. But it’s now a little Orthodox church that’s now served once a year. The bell tower is taken down, but the big Pennsylvania bell is now in kind of a smaller structure. So the priest – he’s a

Ukrainian Consistory priest, Father Derevyenko – he’d been away from the Canora area, almost since the time that my father died (that’s twenty one years ago), and now Father Derevyenko’s come back on the circuit, and is serving Canora. So he was there yesterday, and when I talked with him he said, “Are you the daughter of Steve Danyluk?”, and I said yes, and he said, “I remember his funeral well,” and we talked about my Dad, and how merciful he was. He was a very merciful man, for the down-and-out, just a very realistic, merciful, sociable, somewhat hard-drinking, lively man.

Maybe twice a year he’d visit Father Derevyenko, and he’d bring him a couple of chickens from the farm, and bring him a bottle of vodka, and a few other gifts, and talk man to man – priest to parishioner. He (Father Derevyenko) said to me, “I’ll never forget something else about your father, what happened with the horses when we were on our way to the cemetery.” What happened was, when my father passed away, confessing Christ to the end (his words were “Amen,” when somebody prayed for him), the hearse carrying his body paused at our farm gate. So this whole entourage paused at the gate, and he had two horses still in the pasture... and the horses came right up to the hearse. And as we began to move, the horses – in two, just like they were in a harness – they followed alongside the hearse, along the fence. And they followed, and followed, and followed, and when the hearse left to go more up the hill to the cemetery, the horses began to run – two and two – round, and around, and around that pasture, while all the funeral cars went by. And he (Father Derevyenko) says, “I’ll never forget that sight.”

OC: What year was this?

KS: 1986.

OC: They knew him.

KS: They knew him! And they knew that he was there. Horses have this sense. Father Derevyenko, we talked, and really, it seems my father comes to his mind a lot, too. To me, what my father gave me: encounter – we need to encounter Christ in someone. Even if they are imperfect, even if they sin, even if, as the funeral hymnography says, “there is not a man who has lived and has not sinne.” Let us never forget that. I see that as I go around that old cemetery. I see it as I go on living on the face of this earth. The day we forget that, we have forgotten everything.

OC: That’s a great struggle in modern times.

KS: A tremendous struggle. And we try to weigh our struggle from our perspective, but from God’s perspective, He sees it totally differently.

OC: ...the importance of encountering God in someone else...

KS: You have to. And there’s something else about that, that I often think of, and it is the reverse side of encounter. I think about the late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. I read one of his last interviews that he ever gave in Russian – maybe it was the last interview in any language, but I happened to read it on the web in Russian – and it has since been taken down, because I can’t find it anymore. But he talks about his early years, and you might recall that he lived in Persia...



OC: I didn’t know that.

KS: He lived in Persia at the time. I guess the family in their life in the diaspora, and he talked about being among the flocks and the birds of that country, and how he experienced the Lord in nature, in the openness. And he added in Russian an interesting phrase: “And there was no man to spoil it for me.” And that is the flip side to encounter, is that we should never allow ourselves to be in a place where the winds that we experience – the winds of influence from someone else – batter us and bash us, and make us lose that inner core of what God is doing. We always have to have that inner core central, and be prepared to protect it.

OC: What does your experience tell you in terms of how we as Orthodox Christians can cope with urbanization? Because all these experiences are firmly rural, and they’re alive and real, and urbanization cuts us off from a lot of them.

KS: You know it really threw me when I came to the city in 1970, and I remember writing a poem saying, “here, the moon is just another street light.” But you know, in the thirty years, the Lord has brought me around. He brought me around by quickening to me the Scripture, “You shall be blessed in the city, you shall be blessed in the country,” (Deuteronomy 28:3). You know in Deuteronomy? There is a blessing that is rural, and it’s urban, “blessed shall be your kneading trough” – it doesn’t say the kneading trough is necessarily in the country, you know?

There’s a great blessing that was for everywhere. So that was one thing. Secondly, I think if we keep our eyes and ears open, and hearts open, the Lord will reveal to us urban places that speak to us. Natural places. And He has brought me, strangely enough, He has blessed us with a house that has a natural bush behind it, and a park, and sometimes I even find the odd morel mushroom in that little bush, which means it’s a piece of prairie. It’s a real piece of prairie. It’s very small – it’s enough for birds to come – and it’s got some wild poplars.

And then a few years ago, I got interested in an adjoining park where there are trees, balsamic poplars, and the balsamic poplar is a healing poplar. Apparently the leaves are supposed to be full of acetylsalicylic acid, what aspirin has.... There's a big open clearing with east light there. Those trees began to intrigue me, and I started to go there for my quiet time, and it was where I'd go and take my book, Saint Theophan the Recluse, Twenty(-some) Sermons for Nuns – I used to read that so vigorously – and I would take it there, and somehow the words would mingle with the trees, and the leaves, and the light. I'd face the east, and just sit and enjoy. There's a hill there in that park, beside those trees, and it's an urban hill, but it's still a hill, and I'd go to that hill. I tell Vladika (Archbishop Seraphim of Ottawa) that I call that hill "I Can See Fair Haven Hill"¹.

OC: And Fair Haven is a couple thousand miles away!

KS: I know! But that is where I look toward Fair Haven, and that is where I ask the blessing of Vladika.

OC: It reminds me of a quote that some contemporary Orthodox writer wrote, and said that unlike the New Age idea that Heaven is a big pasture, or fields, or a forest or something, it says in the Bible that the Kingdom of Heaven is always presented as a city.

KS: Yes – a city, an urban place.

OC: ...to encourage us who have to live in cities...

KS: With the concrete under our feet, we long for something that connects with the earth, all the way down. I had the pleasure of doing a First nations interview series on their adjustments to urbanization, three years ago I did. I interviewed some native

¹Fair Haven is the episcopal residence of Archbishop Seraphim of the OCA, located just outside Ottawa.

elders... a person who runs a design shop, some filmmakers – Dark Thunder Productions. We talked about how they feel about urbanization, and I realized that, human-to-human, their feelings and my feeling were one. And I began to realize that there are many people living in cities who feel the same way that I felt initially.

Those were remarkable interviews, because with some of them, we didn't only talk about their experiences of reserves being torn up for agricultural lands, forests with natural spring disappearing, ladyslippers that were now turned to stubble, just for money, the way they can get back to camping just for a while in the north, and they can say for their children how important that is, to get away, and to go up north. They really stick to the values of human dignity and honouring one another, keeping the traditions of the elders, the value of the grandmothers – they do this in their setting, which underlines the value that we not do the same -- why should we not?--is our God not powerful enough to keep us in the city? Do His truths somehow... stop at the city gates? They'd better not. They don't.

And we have to also be careful that we don't drift into sentimentalism. That's why I always try with my rural-urban experience to divorce myself from sentimentalism, but preserve strongly the *kairos* moments, when life is real, and we are real, and all is real...

OC: When you think back to your childhood memories on the prairies, do you remember the pace of life, or the amount of activity, having a significant role to play in terms of this closeness with creation?

KS: Yes, definitely. The fact that your activities were curtailed by the roads getting blocked, and the snowplough couldn't come for a week, and you had to sit with your mother in the evenings, and what are you going to do, because there are no television and no

radio, because there is no electricity. And there's no running water. So what do you do? You learn to embroider, you learn to crochet, your father reads the Winnipeg Free Press. I remember distinctly him taking one of our school books, and reading us a poem. It had either a Latin or a Greek base, and he sat at the table with that coal oil lamp and in a very sort of sing-song poetic voice, he read us that poem. It was so beautiful.

He did things at Christmas, like sing long and involved Galician songs, all by himself. The melodies were almost monotonous, but each verse was a dialogue between Herod and the Kings, and the search for the Christ Child. It went on for maybe twenty, twenty-five verses.

OC: Do you remember these songs?

KS: Do you know what? Fortunately, I found it on a record. It seems very much the same one that he sang. And I'm glad, because we never recorded that one, and it came out of where his people were from.

The pace of life, the fact that we were milking cows by age five, six, doing work outside till dark every night, we had blisters on our hands. Some people would say, is that slave labour or child abuse or what? But all kids worked like that then. You had your school clothes, and the minute you came home you dressed in your everyday working clothes, and we worked until dark.

OC: Was there ever a sense of not knowing who you were, or depression?

KS: You know, a little bit, because we were raised between two cultures. I felt we were somehow Metis. It was hard for us...

OC: Not that you were Metis, but that you were in the same position as Metis...

KS: Exactly, yes. We were on the border when we visited our Doukhobor relatives, and we were sort of on the border when we visited our Ukrainian relatives. So we didn't feel totally... we knew we were different, because we straddled the two cultures. It's like my mother: she can't speak Ukrainian, except with a heavy Russian accent, and my father could never speak Russian, except with a heavy Ukrainian accent. And when I do it, it seems that both of them come out sounding kind of close to what they should (*Laughter*). It's like the difference!

But being depressed? Our lives were really, really real there, and if there was a funeral, or if there was anything, children were taken to everything. So you heard if somebody jumped down a well, or you heard if somebody died this way or that way. Our lives had a lot of sorrows, and because sometimes cultures involve a fair bit of drinking, you end up with... kids know about problems very early.

But all that was reality, and I worry sometimes that our kids... you know kids these days watch "Friends," they watch all these television shows, that are so-called "reality", and they show you the base side of life. We saw the black side of life, but I hope quite a bit within a perspective, you know?

OC: It wasn't...

KS: It wasn't random, or canned, you know what I mean?

OC: It wasn't a construct.

KS: It wasn't a construct – it was reality. So if the cow died and they dragged her old body off to the stone pile to rot, you came there, and you stared the worms going in and out of her stomach...it is like W.O. Mitchell's, "Who Has Seen the Wind."

... Sometimes the truths we learn from books, they're good for a time, but they have to have a strong grounding in the reality of our lives. I'd almost rather talk to somebody who could say, (through) their life experience, I saw something there, I saw some truth here, rather than someone telling me, I read this book yesterday, and on page 368 it says...

OC: Concepts.

KS: Yes. And I've done a lot of that in my life. I have.

OC: It's very easy in Canada.

KS: Yes, it is.

OC: The quick access, to put something in a bottle.

KS: Yes. Not too long ago, I asked someone from another country, an Orthodox country, do you have much *duchovnaya literatura* (spiritual literature)? And he looked at me and he was not interested to pursue this topic, and he said, "We have plenty, we have plenty." And he went on talking about whatever reality he was talking about. (Laughs). So I'm not against reading, but having come now from quite a few years of reading, I'd say our reading has to be tempered.

OC: Have you come full circle?

KS: I don't know. (Laughs) One of my favourite movies which is *Pered Dozhdot* (Before the Rain) which is set at a Macedonian monastery, it says the circle is not round.

OC: (Laughs) Amen!

You've done a lot with the Orthodox archival work in Canada, and particularly with the memory of Saint Arseny. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

KS: Yes. Well, he came into my life with, as you say, the historical element, as Sifton² began to draw me somehow. To be involved with Sifton, where the Russian Orthodox monastery was for so many years, and the pilgrimages when Vladika Arseny became bishop in 1926³, and then for nearly ten years Sifton was a place of rest for him.. It reminded him of his home back in Ukraine, and he was glad for this nucleus which he felt (from which) rays would go forth, which would affect all of Canada. Knowing the tremendous hardships in which he worked, with the Church in turmoil, and these jurisdictions, and the whole this – he survived the Bolshevik Revolution, and Winnipeg was quite a hotbed, even in the twenties. He suffered on all counts.

And like you said, you look at him as a bishop, when he tries to create a new parish at St. Walburg, and puts an appeal across Canada (for financial aid), he ends up with something like ten dollars. That's all he gets!

And yet he went to St. Walburg – it's near Lloydminster, on the border with Alberta – and he wrote, *ni padai duchom*, do not fall in spirit: I do not fall in spirit, and you do not fall in spirit either!

²Sifton was the spiritual hub for the work of Archbishop Arseny of Winnipeg, and the location today of the Canadian Orthodox Museum.

³Prior to the Revolution, all canonical Orthodox Christians had been under the jurisdiction of the Church in Russia. In the 1920s, following the Russian revolution of 1917, the Orthodox Jurisdictional situation in Canada was in confusion, as various group imported priests and bishops from their respective homelands to set up their own jurisdictions in the gaps left by the Communist persecution of the Church. The situation also saw a number of imposters, pretending to be Orthodox bishops and priests, claiming authority in Canada.

So, the calibre of the person! He really jumps off the pages of *Amerikanski Pravoslavni Vestnik* (American Orthodox Herald)⁴, because there is his diary, *The Diary of a Missionary*, and you see how he uses words, how he puts sentences together, how his soul expressed the truths that he knows. He was quite emotional. Joy would flood him. So, you know, I got to know him more and more through that, and then with Sifton, when you sit in the church, which even though it is not the monastery church (it's the church in town), somehow there, you feel his presence very, very strongly.

OC: Are some of his writings from *Amerikanski Pravoslavni Vestnik* in print?

KS: They are starting to be. I've done a few. We have this online exhibit on the Archdiocesan website (www.archdiocese.ca), we have "Roots of Community," and if you click around there you'll see certain things translated, and there's room to do more from *Vestnik*. I know Spencer Estabrooks is after me to take some time to keep doing it, and maybe we should actually find someone who would do it, with more time than what I have, and maybe even with better talent for doing translation.

But, he is a marvellous jewel in the crown...

OC: Spencer.

KS: No. (*Laughs*) Spencer might be. Are you being prophetic? But Vladika Arseny is, many call on him for help. Even at Sifton, one of the key organizers, she's a Roman Catholic Irish woman who spent most of her life as an Arctic social worker, she calls on him – she sits in the church regularly, Dot Connolly. She calls on – her friend, she says – Arseny. And I often think of that: he's not restricted just to the Orthodox.

⁴An early North American Diocesan newspaper.

OC: God's grace shines to the whole world.

KS: Shines! And he speaks to her, in terms of his life calls to her, and she puts her petitions before him. And of course the Canonization Commission, which I am a member of, too, the wheels have been turning slowly, and we collect, and we have sent a parcel with the hymnography, and the proposed iconography – proto-iconography. Sometimes obstacles appear where members of the Commission – like myself, I feel like I could be doing more, but (sometimes) we feel like we have ropes tied around our legs to get things done. We say, why am I not doing it? Well, probably because temptation has taken us, and we don't realize, and we're sidetracked. So I cannot say that it's always external forces; there are various forces that prevent us from doing the work the way we should.

OC: You mentioned a hope that the rays of what was done at Sifton would reach out across Canada. Do you think they have, and if so, how?

KS: Oh, yes. I think they have. You know, we don't always know the trajectory that prayers take, you know? The prayers at Sifton were there for a long, long, long time. Then Sifton, the ones that lived there, even the number of monks, when I visit Sifton, even the monastery grounds, they were blessed again, and again, and again. And now something like our bishop – his heart has been struck by the value of Sifton. That's probably also the prayers at work.

He takes the logs from Sifton, and he turns it into the cutting boards, which are used on all the altars (footnote). Across Canada, those boards are from Sifton.

He took the *bashni*, the towers (cupolas), and he put them on top of the chapel at Fair Haven (the bishop's residence, outside Ottawa). You know, it keeps going. We keep unearthing vestments of

various sorts, which we show at Sifton. We have a seasonal museum now called the Canadian Orthodox Pioneer Museum, and we show these vestments. So again, grace goes forth. So yes, Sifton, maybe in ways we don't yet recognize, it has served and is serving that central purpose.

It's such an out-of-the-way spot, it doesn't even have a sign saying you've arrived! I said, we have a museum, we've got two hundred visitors, and there isn't even a sign saying Sifton! (*Laughs*)

OC: Maybe Heaven is like this.

KS: Maybe so.

OC: So, do you have any last words...

KS: (*Laughs*)

OC: Hopefully not *your* last words! Any last words regarding your story, and your life on the prairies, the Church, the Doukhobors, Saint Arseny and Sifton?

KS: Somehow we have to encourage our children to listen and watch. Maybe because I was raised in an era when kids were shy with adults. Maybe respectful, if you could call it that. We watched and listened a lot – we didn't talk. We'd go visiting with our mother. There was one lady, she and her husband would come out from the city – all they had was a granary – and they would live in it. They had a stove, they had a bed, they had a table, and that's all. She had rhubarb jam in boxes under the bed, and she'd have fresh bread made. They had one cow there, and in the summer she'd churn butter, and we'd say, lets go visit! All of us. We'd say, what are we going to do in that granary? But when we'd get there, it was so interesting! We'd sit in a row on the bed, because that bed had to be the sofa when a number of guest arrived, and she would bake bread, and she would whip out the butter, and she would reach

underneath and pull out the jam. She'd make coffee on that stove, and we'd all sit there and have that, as refreshments, with the sun pouring in through the one window that the granary had.

You know, the wind buffeting the building around, and us sitting in there, and mothers talking about gardens or whatever it was, and you know you can't replace a memory like that. It was an Orthodox moment, you know, it really was.

OC: I wish I could travel with you to all of these places, through all of these memories, in person. But short of that, it's very helpful for us to be reconnected with some of this, especially if we have to take on the task of passing it on to our own kids.

KS: Yes. And somehow pray to the Lord that He raise up the experiences. Because these experiences didn't come because somebody planned it, they came because they happened! How are we going to do this for our own children? Or maybe that's the wrong question: how's the Lord going to do it? But how are we going to give them the time and space, the ears and the eyes, to help their ears and their eyes to hear and to see? That would be my last thing I would say.





IN PRAISE OF TEMPERANCE

Transcriber's Note: In 1907, Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) of Alaska compiled a general report on the condition of the Alaskan Vicariate of the American Orthodox mission for the year 1906 (?). In section VII, under the heading "Church Organizations" (p.34), Bishop Innocent made the following comments about the publication of the Orthodox Temperance Society pamphlet to promote sobriety among its members,

"For the constant remembrance of the promise to maintain sobriety, the members of the Temperance Society, in the past year, have compiled a special Temperance pamphlet, with a summary of principal testimonies, from the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers, against drunkenness. This pamphlet was compiled in Unalaska, translated into the Aleut language and printed on our Diocesan press on the highest quality paper, with ornamentation and an icon of Christ the Saviour, in a quantity of 1200 copies. Following the example of the Unalaskans, this pamphlet was

taken by the inhabitants of Tatitlak, who printed it in the Kolosh (Tlingit) and English languages in the same quantity. Following them, the inhabitants of Kodiak, and finally, those of Afognak, printed it in the English and Kodiak (Alutiiq) languages".

At present, it has not been possible to locate the Tlingit, Alutiiq and English translations of the Temperance pamphlet, referenced by Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) above.

A new English translation (2008) of the Temperance pamphlet is provided below:

- Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess. (Ephesians 5:18)
- Take heed to yourselves, lest at anytime your hearts be overcharged with overeating and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares. (St. Luke 21:34)
- Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:6)
- Woe to them that rise up in the morning, and follow strong drink; who wait at it till evening: for the wine shall inflame them. (Isaiah 5:11)
- Who has woe? who trouble? who has quarrels? and who vexations and disputes? whose eyes are livid? Are not those of them that stay long at wine? are not those of them that haunt the places where banquets are? (Proverbs 23:29)
- Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:10)
- Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)
- A drunkard likens himself to irrational beasts. (St. John Chrysostom)
- Nothing is as pleasing to the devil as drunkenness. (St. John Chrysostom)

- On account of drunkenness, one's Guardian Angel weeps, while the demons make glad and rejoice over drunkards.
- Happy is the home where sobriety dwells: there abides the blessing of God.
- The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (Romans 13:12)

The English text of the "Orthodox Temperance Society Pamphlet" (1906) from Unalaska, Alaska. Archpriest Paul Mercurief (the Aleut priest from the Pribilof Islands, now living in Anchorage, who has helped immensely on the Aleut section of the project), helped with the original proof-reading of the original Aleut-language portion of the Pamphlet.

Thanks to God, the 1906 Pamphlet is now available on-line in its entirety (the 43th Alaskan Orthodox text), at: <http://www.asna.ca/alaska/aleut/temperance.pdf>



SANTA LUCIA

Canada's First Saint's Day Celebration?

"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord;"

– Romans 14:6

It began in the darkest hours of the morning of December 13th, in the years before the Great Schism of 1054 divided Sweden from the Orthodox Church. A young woman wearing a white gown, a red sash and a crown of lingonberry twigs and blazing candles emerges out of the darkness carrying a tray of rich saffron buns and steaming coffee to wake the family.

Throughout Sweden the feast day of Santa Lucia, or Saint Lucy, is celebrated as a festival of lights. The Lucia Queen, or *Lussibruden* (Lucy Bride) leads the processions. The tradition of honouring Saint Lucy came originally from Germany and speculates that the festival was



Newfoundland's Lance Aux Meadows - Could this Viking settlement in Atlantic Canada have been home to the first Saint Lucia celebrations in North America?

originated in Sweden by Vikings who travelled south on expeditions to Italy and brought back the stories of the Christian martyr, Lucia. Ironically, it is these same Norse explorers who also went *a'viking* (raiding) across the Atlantic to Iceland, Greenland, and the Newfoundland settlement at Lance Aux Meadows who may have celebrated the festival of Saint Lucy as the first major saint's day on Canadian soil.

As early as the sixth century, Saint Lucy was venerated in Rome as a virgin martyr; her Life as it is known today was written by the western Orthodox Saint Aldhelm of Sherborne at the end of the seventh century. Her original feast day (the day of her martyrdom) was on the solstice which was December 13 by the Julian calendar rather than December 21 which it became with the change to the Gregorian calendar in the 1300s, linking it with the far older Yule and Winter festivals of pre-Christian times.

There are two well-known legends attributed to "Santa Lucia". At one time Sweden was in the grip of a terrible famine and at the height of winter when things were their worst a ship sailed across Lake Vannern with a beautiful young woman dressed all in white at its helm. She was so radiant that there was a glow of light about her head. It was Saint

Lucia with a shipload of food. In Syracuse the people were in the midst of a famine and they gathered in the cathedral to implore God to help in the name of Saint Lucia. A ship loaded with wheat sailed into the harbor as they prayed. This is the explanation given for the *cuccidata*, or cooked wheat which is an ingredient in many festival foods in Italy. Similar porridges and puddings are also prepared for friends, family and visitors in Northern European and Scandinavian homes - likely in connection with the blessing of wheat (or *kolivo*) for the feast day of a saint in Orthodox parishes today.

Young women in Sweden to this day go from one house to the next carrying torches or candles to light their way, bringing baked goods, stopping to visit a bit at each house and returning home by break of day. The young women wear crowns festooned with lingonberry leaves and candles, a custom that still persists (although the crowns are now often electric lights).

Saint Lucia's martyrdom reflects the common experience of numerous virgin martyrs of the early centuries of the Christian faith. Rejecting both impurity of life and lawful marriage from her youth, Saint Lucia chose a life totally dedicated to Our Lord and Saviour, a choice borne witness to in the white garment she wears. A victim of torture by pagans who put out her eyes, she also bears witness to true, spiritual sight, and the True Light of Christ she continued to follow, even in her imposed physical blindness. (Her icon often bears an image of her carrying a plate of small cakes; these are euphemistic substitutions for the images of two eyes on a platter found in earlier icons).

In this way, Saint Lucia is an ideal patron for young women in modern society, an image of purity and chastity preserved amid an age of corruption and temptation, and an image of one who maintains an unwavering vision of Christ among those whose spiritual eyes are truly blind to God.

Just as Saint Catherine shows us the difference between worldly learning and heavenly wisdom, Saint Lucia emulates true love and virtue in an age dominated by romantic delusion, and true Orthodox Christian faith in an age dominated by spiritual blindness.

Holy Saint Lucia, pray for us!





SAINT BONIFACE & THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Approaching the season of Christ's Nativity, I am reminded of a question that puzzled me as a child: *Why on earth do we celebrate the birth of the Lord by dragging a live tree into our house?*

Certain sectarians reject the practice of decorating a Christmas tree, condemning it as the ultimate symbol of syncretism (i.e. mixing Christian and pagan practices). Yet no Orthodox Christian could accept such a simplistic characterization of history, and even as a child, I somehow suspected that the critics couldn't be right. Unfortunately, the sales people at the local Canadian Tire store were little help in enlightening a nine-year-old kid with weird questions; they were too busy selling trees.

Years later, several people (I think most of them Protestant seminarians) announced to me that it was Martin Luther who created the Christmas tree, envisioning it as the ideal symbol of German Christianity, a symbol of the wood of the Cross, bearing the golden apples of the New Eden. Apparently red apples were painted gold during the Reformation; who knew they had the time?

This explanation seemed to satisfy surface curiosity about the roots of the Christmas tree, but it left my conscience wondering: why would Orthodox Christians observe a custom introduced by the leader of the

Protestant Reformation? The notion boggled my mind as much as my question years before in the tree lot outside the Canadian Tire.

Fortunately for me, and for several boxes of old Christmas decorations that nearly made their way to the trash bin, there soon emerged what one might call an "Orthodox answer" to the question of the Christmas tree, one which cleared my conscience enough to break out into several verses of *O Tannenbaum* (well, not quite). I was delighted to discover that the roots of the Christmas tree (no pun intended) are indeed as Orthodox as incense, boiled wheat, and beeswax candles. And putting aside the lighthearted approach to a curious story, the origins of the Christmas tree are in fact saintly, and in keeping with the best of Orthodox Christian missionary work.

It was Saint Boniface, an English missionary to the Germanic people, who realized the central importance that trees played in the spiritual life of the people he was attempting to evangelize. Each pagan village had its own sacred oak, often dedicated to the pagan god Thor. After a first successful attempt tearing down one such tree with the help of an unexpected and divinely-sent windstorm, Saint Boniface began a campaign across Germany, uprooting oak trees and baptizing thousands of converts as he went.

Tradition tells us that it was at Geismar that Saint Boniface discovered a fir tree growing from the base of an uprooted oak. He told the people there assembled:

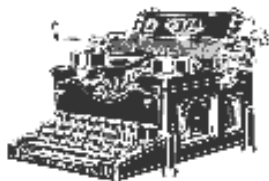
"This humble tree's wood is used to build your homes: let Christ be at the centre of your households. Its leaves remain evergreen in the darkest days: let Christ be your constant light. Its boughs reach out to embrace and its top points to heaven: let Christ be your Comfort and Guide".⁵

Although the burning of the Serbian *badnjak* oak on the eve of Nativity bears some resemblance to the story of Saint Boniface, the two customs are quite separate in origins. It is quite beautiful that both histories and customs honour the same image: the wood of the Cross of Christ.

That alone is enough to make the selling and decorating of Christmas trees a holy thing.

– Father Geoffrey Korz+

⁵Quote taken from Saint Boniface's home in Crediton, U.K., tourism website, at http://www.crediton.co.uk/tourism/boniface_crediton.html



POETRY

Outside the Vineyard Gate, I Stand and Call

Outside the vineyard gate, I stand and call
Unto the Lord thereof: "Please let me in!"
I seek not gold or silver for to win,
But only for to work till night doth fall.
Throughout the heat of day, I have been thrall
To every passing pleasure, pain and sin.
In idleness the morning did begin,
And until now, I laboured not at all.
But I have seen these workers' industry,
And ever and anon, some man or maid
Hath passed into the fields to glean or prune.
So here I stand, while daylight still there be,
And ask if I may lend some little aid.
I must be quick, for night is coming soon!

- Sara Hillis



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THE CHURCH KITCHEN

SANTA LUCIA BUNS (*Lussekatter*)

One mandatory constituent in the Swedish celebrations of this Orthodox feast day is a saffron-flavoured bun, in Swedish called a lussekatt, a "Lucia cat". The shape of this bun might vary somewhat, but is always based on bread designs dating back to earlier Christmas celebrations.

300ml milk (soy/coconut milk)
50g baker's yeast
125g butter or margarine
700g all-purpose flour
1 egg (optional)

Raisins
1g saffron
150 g sugar
salt

Melt butter or margarine in a pan and add milk and saffron. Warm mixture to 37C (100F). Use a thermometer – correct temperature is important! Pour mixture over finely divided yeast; add remaining ingredients (except egg and raisins), which should have a temperature of 21-23C (72-75F). Mix into smooth dough. Cover dough with a piece of cloth and let rise for 30 minutes. Knead dough. Divide into 25-30 pieces and form each piece into round bun. Let buns rest for a few minutes, covered by a piece of cloth. Form each bun into a string, 15-20 cm long, then arrange string in a suitable shape (e.g. an "S" or "Double S"). Regardless of shape, ends of string should meet. Press a few raisins into dough. Cover buns with a piece of cloth and let rise for 40 minutes. Whip the egg together with a few grains of salt, and paint buns with mixture. Bake them for 5-10 minutes in the oven at 250C (475F) until golden brown. Sugar.

A quicker icing is a few drops of water with confectioners' sugar.

- *Sandy Takacs*



NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE

SAINT LAWRENCE RIVER (*Pr. Noun*)

The Saint Lawrence River was first visited by a European in 1535, during the explorations of Jacques Cartier, guided by the two sons of the Iroquois chief Donnacona. Originally named *Kahnawákye* in the Tuscarora language and *Kaniatarowanenneh* (literally "big waterway") in Mohawk, the river was named for the martyr Saint Lawrence the Deacon of Rome, on whose feast day the river was encountered by Champlain.

Saint Lawrence himself is noted for his connection with the chalice from the Last Supper, known as the Holy Grail, with some suggestions that he was entrusted with its care. Others have suggested that as a deacon, the care of the liturgical chalice was his primary responsibility, and that from this association was drawn his connection with the Grail. In either case, the commemoration of this chalice-bearing saint in the name of this river is very suitable, since just as the Chalice pours out life to the world, the Saint Lawrence River has proved to be God's means of bringing Canada its life as a nation, from its earliest use as a highway by native peoples, to its central part in Canada's settlement, to the access it provided countless immigrants coming to this land.





Q&A

Questions from Readers

Can I eat whey for diet or fitness or medical reasons, during a fast?

- J.J., London

Generally speaking, whatever is prescribed by a doctor should be taken as medicine, even if it would otherwise break the fasting rules. Many medicines which come in pill form have animal products in them, but this is overlooked because of the medical need – i.e. Christians don't approach fasting like Pharisees (at least, we shouldn't).

Some doctors may prescribe a heavy protein or iron diet for certain conditions. In such cases, one should work with the doctor to find something that could fit within the fasting rules, or simply consult one's spiritual father or confessor. Very likely, one will simply get a blessing to eat whatever is necessary for medical reasons.

As for body building and fitness routines, a careful distinction must be made between regimes to restore or maintain regular health, and regimes designed to make the body attractive. The former are normal and often necessary in our idle times; the latter are simply narcissistic. Saint Paul advises that bodily exercise profits us a little, while godliness is profitable for everything in our

lives and hereafter (c.f. 1 Timothy 4:8). Again, check with your spiritual father or confessor on this, but as a rule, body building is not compatible with an Orthodox Christian life.

Is it wise to substitute one lesser vice or temptation for a greater one, in order to break off addiction to a greater one?

- M.K., Ontario

Like many things in the spiritual life, it depends what one means. As a rule, we should try to struggle against any of the passions. In his book *Unseen Warfare*, Saint Theophan the Recluse tells us that we should concentrate on our strongest passions first, but switch to whichever passion confronts us at a given moment.

For example, if one tends toward criticism of other people, one should be primarily focussed on avoiding critical words, and emphasizing positive ones. If one is tempted by a desire to get drunk, toward lustful thoughts, or toward gorging on a huge meal, one should address those passions immediately.

We must be careful about "substituting" one passion for another, since it opens up the very real possibility of creating more spiritual problems than it solves.

I have a question about Orthodox fasting. Tonight, my spouse (who is not Orthodox) and I are having a couple over for dinner and, though it's a fast-day, we're serving meat and ice-cream for dessert, as well as vegetables. In the interests of hospitality, should I partake, or should I abstain for fasting's sake? Thanks again.

- W.J., Ontario, Canada

You are in the situation where your wife does not observe the fast (I believe this is the case, yes?), and you must come to terms with the practice in a day-to-day household context. One cannot expect others to observe the fast, or in this case, to even understand why you would want to do so. One does have the option of eating very modestly, of selecting the more lenten foods on the table, or (perhaps the simplest but least tempting route) skipping the ice cream. Any of this must be done in an unobtrusive way, with an off-hand, "Oh, no thanks..." or a simple smile and head shaking. The less attention it gets, the better for your household, and the better for your spiritual heart.

At the delivery of a child, most women today have pain killers (epidurals). Is this against the Orthodox Faith? Isn't it more "natural" to go without this?

- S.A., Hamilton, Ontario

The pain of childbirth is a result of the Fall of Mankind. Like physical illness, hunger, and all sorts of other maladies that did not exist before the human race fell away from God, these things are now part of our life in the world. Some heresies (early ones in the Church, as well as Seventh Day Adventism, and certain New Age views today) try to re-create our state before the Fall through certain laws about food and regular medication. The Church has never endorsed this. Just as we take medication for sicknesses that result from the Fall, so too an epidural during the delivery of a child is intended to save a woman from some of the unfortunate effects of sin.

Painkillers are not a solution to sin, nor are they risk-free in their capacity to addict us, but used circumspectly by a doctor, they can offer relief in a way which does not contradict the Orthodox Faith.

I'm at school right now, and not holding down a paying job. How can I tithe, should I, and must I?

- J., London

Tithing is the ancient Christian idea of offering one-tenth of income to the work of the Church, plus an additional share for the needs of the poor. It is a worthwhile practice to teach from childhood, based on allowances and monetary gifts.

In cases where one has little or no income, one might offer what some call the "widow's mite" - whatever one can give, based on income or savings. Alternately or additionally, one can and should offer time and labour for the upkeep, adornment, and maintenance of the parish and its members. This is a very suitable, worthy, and faithful alternative to monetary giving in cases where one has little or no income to offer.

Should we seek martyrdom?

- N.M., Ontario

A few of the saints (such as Saint Ignatius of Antioch) actually looked forward to martyrdom, but we must be careful to avoid pridefulness. If we assume that we have the spiritual strength to face martyrdom, we deceive ourselves. If martyrdom should come, unavoidably, one is called to pray to God, Who will provide the strength we need to face whatever we must. Otherwise, such a pursuit can easily lead to delusion, and to our downfall.





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