

### *Tikhon con't*

kept in quarantine overnight. Organizers of the welcome had forgotten about this detail so some of the faithful who had come from afar had to return home without seeing Archbishop Tikhon. But this was by God's providence — though unremarked by those there at the time — since the Archbishop's arrival on American soil was the morning of December 13th, 1898, the day that Saint Herman of Alaska is celebrated as the first saint of North America, his traditional day of repose in 1836. The welcome at the dock in Manhattan included crowds of Russian and Arabic speaking faithful, the Russian General Consul, Father Raphael and the assistant priest of the Antiochian parish, Father Ephrem, as well as many others. One Antiochian parishioner recited a welcoming poem in Arabic, while Saint Raphael acted as interpreter. He was fluent in Russian, having lived in Russia and taught there for a number of years at the Kazan Academy.

Father Raphael accompanied Saint Tikhon to Saint Nicholas Church (which was then located at 323 Second Avenue in Manhattan, between 18th and 19th Street) where Father Alexander Hotovitzky greeted him with joyful but also sobering words about the challenges the new archbishop would face in America, including pressure on the faithful in Alaska and hatred from the Uniates: "O Vladyka, your Eminence, there are many wild branches in this vineyard. Insincerity, stubbornness, capricious children unused to a father's affectionate oversight... unbelief lurks in the hearts of people, and many of our brothers have fallen away under the weight of need and the seductions of surrounding non-Orthodox society."

Archbishop Tikhon thanked everyone for their kindness and said that his sincere and most heartfelt prayer at this moment is the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come!" He went on:

"What better missionary goal is there than this? And God has already shown his great mercy to America in no small measure. The Kingdom of God has already arrived here: the building of Orthodox work has already begun and is gradually strengthening and expanding. A good feeling is taking root among the widely dispersed members of the church here. And the surroundings to which divine Providence has brought us to carry out our life and work are not hostile to our high goal.

"Americans are reputed to be a religious people; America is a country of religious tolerance; the very first pioneers came here to protect their treasure — their abiding religious convictions for which they had been persecuted in the old world; and even now our own brothers by blood and faith have fled here from the old world where they are oppressed under the yoke of submission to the pope and to Rome....

"May God's Kingdom come! May it settle also in our own hearts: may the inner forces of our spirit go out to meet the

mercy of God. When we are at peace with God, at peace with ourselves and our conscience, and at peace with our neighbors it is easy to overcome whatever troubles the enemy of the Christian puts in front of us in this missionary arena, on the way to fulfilling our high calling."

Although the particular challenges are different, Saint Tikhon's words about both the difficulties and the opportunities facing the Church are an encouragement to us today. Archimandrite Raphael then greeted Archbishop Tikhon on behalf of his Syro-Arab flock with the following words:

"All twenty-thousand of the Antiochian [Syro-Arab] colony both in New York and throughout North America together with me congratulate your Eminence, our new spiritual father and Archpastor on your successful arrival and dare to ask your Eminence one request only, that you would continue to show all of us Orthodox Antiochians [Syro-Arabs] who live within your God-protected diocese the same motherly love, the same fatherly care, the same archpastoral attentiveness that your Eminence's predecessor showed us" [Archbishop Nicholas (Ziorov), 1891-98].

"And we, from our side, recalling the words of the Apostle, 'Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls' [Hebrews 13:17] not only promise to the Holy Synod and Your Eminence complete submission and filial obedience to all your fatherly instructions and archpastoral commands, but will wholeheartedly devote ourselves from now on to your archpastoral care and blessing. May our Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers of his saints, Nicholas of Myra in Lycia the Wonderworker and Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, help your Eminence in your new archpastoral service for the benefit of the Orthodox Church and the flowering of the Orthodox faith in this is new world. Amen."

The Messenger goes on to speak of the pan-Orthodox environment that existed in those days:

"Thanking Father Raphael for these kind words, Archbishop Tikhon replied that all the members of his Orthodox flock are dear to him, and that he will be equally good-willed towards all Orthodox, whatever their national background. Orthodoxy is catholic. If one is in Russia, he said, one doesn't experience this Orthodox catholicity, since all the Orthodox there are Russians. But here, outside the borders of Russia, where under the one roof of an Orthodox church are gathered together Russians, and Greeks and Arabs and others, the understanding of the catholicity of Orthodoxy is completely tangible. And therefore, Vladyka promised to do everything possible to assist the Antiochians [Syro-Arabs]."

Two days later, Saint Tikhon went to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the little Antiochian Church of Saint Nicholas that Father Raphael organized when he first arrived in 1895, a loft

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at 77 Washington Street in lower Manhattan, the predecessor of this cathedral to which Father Raphael and his flock moved in 1902, and which became his episcopal cathedral when Saint Tikhon made him his vicar bishop in 1904.

The loft-church on Washington Street was packed not only with Antiochians but with Russians and many Americans. In his welcoming words, Father Raphael noted the small size of the church and the struggling condition of the immigrant parish, so seemingly out of place hosting such an exalted guest as the new Archbishop from Russia. "Nevertheless," said Father Raphael, "the children of this poor church have such a heart, which thanks to their sincere love as sons and thanks to their genuine devotion and gratitude to their benefactors, can boldly welcome into their midst your Eminence, our loving father and all-merciful Archpastor."

Archbishop Tikhon in reply said that a generous inner disposition and warm feelings are always higher and more valuable, no matter how rich the external conditions. And I think that we can genuinely say that today, almost 120 years after the events that I am recounting, we have the same experience. Even though our external and even our ecclesiastical circumstances may have changed since 1898, nevertheless, our existence as Orthodox Christians of many different backgrounds, our shared apostolic work and our participation in the catholicity of the Church, remain strong and the spirit of mutual support and love among the clergy and faithful is the same as that which must have been experienced in those days.

At the end of the Liturgy, Father Raphael spoke to his community in Arabic (the Messenger printed his full remarks in Russian translation) and expressed gratitude to the Russian Church for providing pastors to care for all the Orthodox in America of all backgrounds who have been scattered across North America — Russians, Slavs, Syro-Arabs and Greeks. And in the spirit of the Apostle Paul who exhorted his communities to pray for those in authority he asked them to pray for Tsar Nicholas II. He also asked them to pray for the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamida, under whose rule most of the Orthodox Arabs had lived, asking God to place his kingdom on a foundation of wisdom, mercy and justice, so that all his subjects might live quiet and peaceful lives in all piety and purity. Finally, he said, "so that our prayers may be complete, we Syro-Arabs, living within the borders of the United States must always pray for the highest governing authority of this country, the honorable President of the United States, Mr. McKinley and all his cabinet ministers and counselors, proclaiming with all our heart: Many years!"

We live in a different civic and cultural context, but perhaps these are not so different after all. We continue to pray for the highest governing authorities of this country; we also sorrowfully bear witness to great sufferings throughout a world that is ravaged by war, persecution and terrorism, and continue to Pray to God that we might live quiet and peaceful lives in our

families, communities and country. And we continue to gather as bishops, clergy and faithful on a pan-Orthodox level, including at the very same locations, as we find ourselves tonight at Saint Nicholas Cathedral.

As we celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and reflect upon the blessings and struggles of the past, let us be inspired by the true icons of the Kingdom, Saint Tikhon and Saint Raphael, who remind us to be grateful to our merciful God for the gift of one another and for the freedom to witness to the Orthodox Faith, which has been proclaimed in North America for more than two hundred years. When the Russian Orthodox missionary monks arrived in Alaska from Valaam Monastery in 1794, the seeds of Orthodox witness were planted on this continent. These seeds have grown over the decades of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Descendants of the Alaskan native peoples are today faithful Orthodox Christians. The immigrant communities of Orthodox people from the Middle East, the Balkans and Eastern Europe are now Americans. The numerous converts to Orthodoxy are a major presence in our Churches, with many serving as bishops, priests and deacons. We see Orthodox dioceses and parishes, monasteries and theological schools, organizations and agencies for education and charity, media ministries, prison ministries and campus ministries, as well as the publication of books and journals for the edification of Orthodox Christians and for outreach to all Americans.

By God's grace, all of these accomplishments have been achieved through the various Orthodox Churches in North America and by the dedication and initiative of Orthodox Christian men and women of vision. We are grateful for what has been accomplished and are also mindful of the task still before us, with all its challenges and obstacles.

Our proclamation of the Orthodox Faith must give priority to the proclamation of the Good News of Christ. What we are given in the treasury of the Orthodox Faith is not intended to be an end in itself, but rather as a witness to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. This is true about the holy icons, which are not ends in themselves but windows into the Kingdom of God. This is true about Orthodox theology, which is not an end in itself but rather a guide to communion with God. Our faith, our icons, our theology, all the gifts we have been given as a great treasury, are means for us to acquire a new and iconic way of seeing and of living.

Christianity is about movement and vision ("come and see" as we heard in today's Gospel), movement and vision that are not limited to the physical realm or in the confines of the mind, but rather takes our hearts, which have been overshadowed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, on the journey that introduces us into the heavenly kingdom. We make this journey in the place that we have been planted and in the community we are a part of, but our goal should be to persevere and support one another on our common journey towards the heavenly kingdom, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

## **The Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**

*Commemorated on March 25*

The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the earliest Christian feasts, and was already being celebrated in the fourth century. There is a painting of the Annunciation in the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome dating from the second century. The Council of Toledo in 656 mentions the Feast, and the Council in Trullo in 692 says that the Annunciation was celebrated during Great Lent.

The Greek and Slavonic names for the Feast may be translated as “good tidings.” This, of course, refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation He brings. The background of the Annunciation is found in the Gospel of Saint Luke (1:26-38). The troparion describes this as the “beginning of our salvation, and the revelation of the eternal mystery,” for on this day the Son of God became the Son of Man.

There are two main components to the Annunciation: the message itself, and the response of the Virgin. The message fulfills God’s promise to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.” The Fathers of the Church understand “her seed” to refer to Christ. The prophets hinted at His coming, which they saw dimly, but the Archangel Gabriel now proclaims that the promise is about to be fulfilled.

We see this echoed in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, as well: “When man disobeyed Thee, the only true God who had created him, and was deceived by the guile of the serpent, becoming subject to death by his own transgressions, Thou, O God, in Thy righteous judgment, didst send him forth from Paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Thy Christ Himself.”

The Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth in Galilee. There he spoke to the undefiled Virgin who was betrothed to Saint Joseph: “Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

In contrast to Eve, who was readily deceived by the serpent, the Virgin did not immediately accept the Angel’s message. In her humility, she did not think she was deserving of such words, but was actually troubled by them. The fact that she asked for an explanation reveals her sobriety and prudence. She did not disbelieve the words of the angel, but could not

understand how they would be fulfilled, for they spoke of something which was beyond nature.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34).

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1: 35-38).”

In his Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation, Saint Philaret of Moscow boldly stated that “the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world.” He explains that salvation is not merely an act of God’s will, but also involves the Virgin’s free will. She could have refused, but she accepted God’s will and chose to cooperate without complaint or further questions.

The icon of the Feast shows the Archangel with a staff in his left hand, indicating his role as a messenger. Sometimes one wing is upraised, as if to show his swift descent from heaven. His right hand is stretched toward the holy Virgin as he delivers his message.

The Virgin is depicted either standing or sitting, usually holding yarn in her left hand. Sometimes she is shown holding a scroll. Her right hand may be raised to indicate her surprise at the message she is hearing. Her head is bowed, showing her consent and obedience. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her is depicted by a ray of light issuing from a small sphere at the top of the icon, which symbolizes heaven. In a famous icon from Sinai, a white dove is shown in the ray of light.

There are several famous icons of the Annunciation. One is in the Moscow Kremlin in the church of the Annunciation. This icon appeared in connection with the rescue of a prisoner by the Mother of God during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Another is to be found in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow (July 8). It was originally located in Ustiug, and was the icon before which Saint Procopius the fool (July 8) prayed to save the city from destruction in 1290. One of the most highly revered icons in Greece is the Tinos icon of the Annunciation (January 30).

The Annunciation falls during Lent, but it is always celebrated with great joy. The Liturgy of Saint Basil or Saint John Chrysostom is served, even on the weekdays of Lent. It is one of the two days of Great Lent on which the fast is relaxed and fish is permitted (Palm Sunday is the other).

## STS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH 85TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**When:** Sunday, April 23, 2017, (St. Thomas Sunday) @ 5:00pm / Dinner to be served @ 5:30

**Where:** Capri Banquets @ 6240 Joliet Rd., Countryside, IL 60525

**Price:** Adults: \$40 / Teens 13-17: \$30 / Children 5-12: \$15 / Under 5 is free

**RSVP:** by April 9 (Palm Sunday) to *85th Anniversary Dinner* c/o Deacon & Matushka Kenny, 2805 Yosemite Dr., Aurora, IL 60503

PLEASE SIGN UP IN BACK OF CHURCH IF YOU PLAN TO GO & WE CAN SEND IN THE FORM FOR OUR CHURCH. SEE FR. ANDREW FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

The following opportunities for special donations are being offered. A portion of the profits will go to benefit the Holy Trinity Building and Restoration Fund.

- THE 85 CLUB: Enjoy a special VIP reception beginning @ 4:00pm for 85 Club & 185 Club members only. Includes hors d'oeuvres, two drink tickets, and recognition in the program. (\$85 per family)
- THE 185 CLUB: Benefits of the 85 Club plus a commemorative icon and two additional drink tickets. (\$185 per family)
- SPONSOR GUEST CLERGY: Sponsor a clergy member's complementary ticket, with recognition in the program. (\$40)

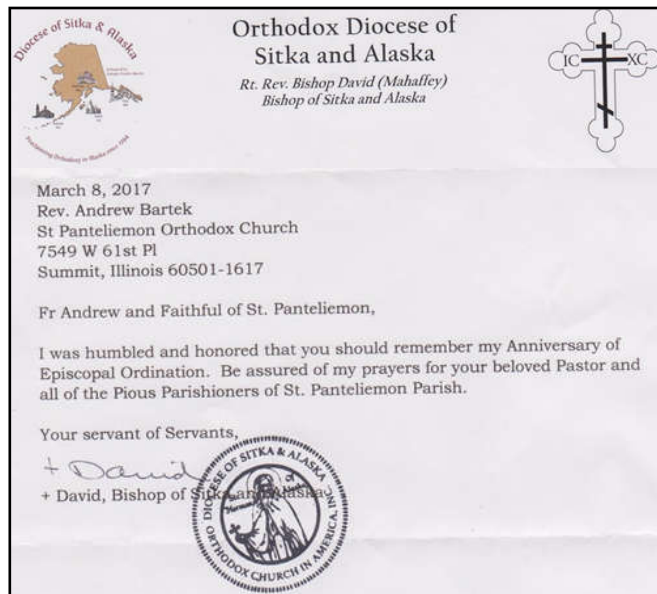
### MENU

First Course: Freshly Baked Bread & a Caesar Salad

Second Course: Rigatoni w/ Vodka Sauce / Chicken Vesuvio with garlic, white wine, special seasonings & peas / Homemade Italian Sausage with tri-colored peppers / Vesuvio Potato Wedges / Fresh Green Beans with garlic & oil

Children's Menu: Chicken fingers & fries

Third Course: Tiramisu & Gourmet Anniversary Cupcakes



## United Nations fellowships available for grads, post-grads

The Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America invites graduate and recent post-graduate students to apply for its fellowships at the United Nations.

“Our programs at the U.N. have been growing every year and continue to effectively represent the Church in civil society,” said the Rev. Dr. Nathanael Symeonides, Director of the department. “We want to continue bringing Orthodox Christians into these fellowships to empower them as future professionals, diplomats, policy-makers and advocates.”

Two applicants will be selected for year-long stipended fellowships that will begin in the fall of 2017. The fellows will work in New York City in the department's office at the Church Center for the United Nations. Fellows will focus their work at the U.N. in three main areas: human rights, environment, or humanitarianism. Among other activities, fellows will have the opportunity to join and participate in the work of nongovernmental organization committees at the U.N., assist in formulating oral and written statements and interventions, plan and host events during U.N. Economic and Social Council functional commissions, and participate in panel discussions at future biennial national clergy-laity congresses.

The Department launched its Faith-based Diplomacy and Advocacy Initiative in 2015 with funding from the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Endowment Fund. Since then, a total of three fellowships have been granted.

Additional information about the program and applications are available on-line. The deadline for the submitting an application for a 2017-2018 fellowship is May 15, 2017.