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### *Bishop NIKON's Pascha Message*

To the faithful of the Holy Diocese of New England and the Holy Albanian Archdiocese  
Christ is Risen! Indeed HE is Risen !

At the beginning of Great Lent, following vespers on Forgiveness Sunday, we sang the Paschal Verses, which conclude with this remarkable acclamation:

*This is the Day of resurrection. Let us be illumined by the feast. Let us embrace each other. Let us call "brothers" even those that hate us, and forgive all by the resurrection, and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead,*

*trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life. And we sing these same words on Pascha.*

The Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the very source of our joy, and that joy is rooted in forgiveness. Having endured betrayal, mockery, humiliation, torture and death on the Cross, Christ is raised from the dead. His Holy Resurrection is the perfect manifestation of God's love and forgiveness for us. It is only through forgiveness that the darkest day in hu-

*Bishop to 3*

### *A Life-Changing Experience*

#### ONE WEEK WITH IOCC IN THE GULF COAST

Nina Wright

*During her Spring Break from Vermont College, March 9-16, Nina Wright from Holy Trinity Church in Willimantic, CT worked with IOCC & Habitat for Humanity in the Gulf Coast in the reconstruction efforts following Hurricane Katrina.*

I returned to school Monday morning and was thrown right back into classes. Needless to say I was overwhelmed

with work and missing New Orleans did not help. My trip with the IOCC was more than I could have asked for. I did not have one moment where I was not having a great time.

I arrived Sunday evening in New Orleans and met the other members of our team. There was a group from Baltimore, one from Ohio, a couple from New York and myself. We stayed a Caritas, at retreat area

owned by two nuns. On Monday, we got a tour of the disaster area: of both a middle class neighborhood and lower class neighborhood including Ward 9, one of the hardest hit areas. It was incredible! Even though four years have passed since the hurricane, so many areas were vacant and full of poverty.

*Gulf to 4*

### *Diocesan Seminarian Profile*

#### LEE WHITFIELD

Rev. J. Sergius Halvorsen

*Editors Note: Over the coming months we will be publishing profiles of the seminarians from the Diocese of New England, all of whom receive diocesan scholarships thanks to your generous donations to ONE Stewards.*

Last fall, Lee Whitfield and his wife Manna and their three daughters, Ayame (9), Miya (4) and Emi (2) bade a fond farewell to their home parish of Christ the Savior Church in Southbury, CT and moved to St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crest-

wood NY so that Lee could begin his studies as a seminarian. As is the case for many who respond to God's call to study at seminary, Lee's journey began with an active life in church as a child.

*Whitfield to 3*

*Parish News*

## CHRIST THE SAVIOR CHURCH, SOUTHBURY CT

Sarah Cole



Christ the Savior Church

Pascha is fast approaching and the members of Christ the Savior look forward to celebrating the feast with joy! On Lazarus Saturday, the children and youth of the parish will gather during the Liturgy and bring their O.C.M.C. mission coin boxes during the Great Entrance. The children have been collecting in their mission boxes during the weeks of Lent. A festive muffin and donut breakfast will follow Liturgy, and Father Vladimir will present gifts to

each of the children as well, in celebration of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday.

We are looking forward to our annual Mexican Fiesta on Saturday, May 3 following Vespers. The Fiesta is an evening of wonderful Mexican food and fellowship to help raise funds to support our missionaries to Project Mexico. This year, Anton, Ivan and their father Sergey Krainiy will be traveling to help with a construction pro-

ject. This is the Krainiy's third year as Mexico missionaries. A recent meeting for those interested in other missionary outreach projects was held. Discussion of the many opportunities for overseas mission trips through O.C.M.C., as well as trips to the Dorothy Day House and Bowery in New York were also discussed.

We welcome any and all visitors to come and worship with us!

*Parish News*

## NORTHERN DEANERY PARENTAL SUPPORT GROUP

Rev. J. Sergius Halvorsen

For the past eight months parents and grandparents from three parishes in the Northern Deanery have been participating in a parental support group that meets once a month. The group has about twenty adult participants who come from three different parishes: Holy Resurrection Church in Claremont NH; Holy Trinity Church in Springfield VT; and St. Jacob

of Alaska Mission in Montpelier/ Northfield Falls VT.

According to Fr. Andrew Tregubov, the inspiration to form the group resulted from ongoing discussions at Holy Resurrection Church about raising children. After Fr. Caleb Abetti was assigned to St. Jacob of Alaska Mission, it was decided to establish a more formal group on a deanery level in order to bring together adults from a wider geographic area with common concerns about parenting. Fr. Andrew says that everyone has basically the same issues and concerns with caring for their children or grandchildren. They started the group in order to provide an open forum for discussion about parenting in the larger life of the Church. Initially they did not expect a great turnout, but involvement has been much better than they imagined.

The meetings are held on Sunday afternoons, in a large facility owned by Fr. Caleb's father in White River Junction

VT. Parents bring their children, and the older kids watch the younger ones while the parents meet. The facility is ideal because there is plenty of room for the children to play, and the adults have a quiet place to meet. The meetings begin with a brief keynote address by either Fr. Andrew or Fr. Caleb, which touches upon an aspect of parenting. Then, the group has open discussion for the remainder of the time. At the conclusion of the meeting adults and children enjoy a potluck dinner together.

During the meetings, parents and grandparents discuss "subject matter that is very deep and very essential" according to Fr. Andrew. He notes that parenting have to do with teaching children how to make good choices and that this touches upon the core issue of the nature of Christian freedom: Godly freedom; positive freedom; how kids learn about freedom and how to love others. Fr. An-



Meeting outside when the weather is nice.

*Bishop from 1*

man history is changed to the most glorious day in human history. Mankind is given the gift of salvation through the life creating sacrifice of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Pascha is our Pascha, His journey becomes our journey. Pascha is the moment in which God transforms the greatest tragedy into the ultimate victory. In the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we can forgive others, because God forgives us!

To forgive all by the resurrection means that the transforming power of Christ's Resurrection from the dead washes us clean of the hatred and bitterness of sin: both our own sin and the sin of others. To call those that hate us brothers and sisters is to fully accept Christ's invitation of

divine adoption, and to recognize that with God as our Father, everyone is our brother and sister. This amazing transformation that Christ works in us through the power of His Resurrection is one in which we become authentically free persons in the love of God. It is a freedom from the power of Satan, sin and death. In this freedom of Christ there is such immeasurable joy that forgiveness becomes second nature. We can see this in a small way in our everyday lives. If something wonderful has happened to you—a child is born; you get a big promotion; someone tells you that they love you—then all of the tiny irritations of every-day life seem trifling by comparison. In the end, the limitless love of God is so immense, that sin is simply annihilated, and tragedy is transformed into triumph. To

be filled with the joy of Christ's Resurrection is to be absolutely assured of God's forgiveness. In the Resurrection there can be no doubt that through Christ God has forgiven us. Therefore, having absolute confidence in God's love for us, and His forgiveness, we then forgive our brothers and sisters, just as God has forgiven us.

Brothers and sisters, this is the day of resurrection, let us be illumined by the feast. Today we open our hearts to the love of God poured out upon us in gracious abundance. Today sin and death are trampled down by Christ's voluntary death. Today we find a new and perfect life of divine forgiveness in Christ who is Risen from the dead.

*T. Nikon*

*In the end, the limitless love of God is so immense, that sin is simply annihilated, and tragedy is transformed into triumph.*

*Whitfield from 1*

Growing up in Jacksonville FL, Lee attended a Southern Baptist church with his family, and he noted that, "Our family was always at church." It was a very active parish with numerous activities for young people, so that the church was the focal point of his spiritual and social life.

Lee's first experience in the Orthodox Church was at Princeton University where he studied as an undergraduate. He was actually introduced to the Orthodox Church by his



Lee and Manna Whitfield

Southern Baptist chaplain was something of a "closet orthodox." He was extremely knowledgeable in church history and liturgy and had also done his dissertation on Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. From this first encounter, Lee began attending Orthodox Church services at Princeton with the Orthodox Christian Fellowship. Even though it would be several years until he was received into the Orthodox Church, this early experience in the Orthodox Church had a significant impact on Lee's spiritual and liturgical life.

Still a Southern Baptist, Lee completed his undergraduate degree at Princeton and then began an M.Div. program at Princeton Seminary. However, he quickly realized that it was not the right time for him to pursue his vocation to ministry. However, the thought of going to seminary and serving the Church remained in the back of his mind.

While in college at Princeton, Lee met Manna Ohmoto and they were married in



Lee Whitfield

1993. In 1994 they moved to New York City where Lee earned a Master's Degree in Philosophy at Columbia University. Manna received her Master's from Rutgers University, and began her career as a science teacher. Later, the Whitfields moved to Connecticut where they both taught at several different private schools.

Manna's family comes from a strong Christian background in Japan, and her grandfather even studied at Hartford Seminary prior to World War II. Even

*Whitfield to 7*

*Lee began attending Orthodox Church services at Princeton with the Orthodox Christian Fellowship*



The IOCC team all ready for our day's work

*Gulf from 1*

After touring, we saw the French Quarter and downtown. Tuesday-Saturday we worked with Habitat building homes from 8:30am to 4:00 pm and a half day on Saturday.

On the street where we were working at least seven houses being built. For the majority of the week, I was working on the roof of one house. We were able to put up the plywood, tarp and shingles by the end of the week.

During this time I had the opportunity to get to know three of the other students in the group with me. I've been keeping in touch with them ever since we departed New Orleans. At times on the work site, the home owners would spend the day working with us. Everyone of them was so appreciative of our

work and the new home they were acquiring.

On Friday we attended the Greek Orthodox Church in New Orleans. We had the opportunity to meet a couple who had just returned to the United States after having flee to Greece as a result of the Hurricane Katrina. They had lost everything, and just returned to begin the rebuilding process.

Saturday brought another memory that will stick with me forever. The two nuns who were housing us, teach children whose schools and homes were destroyed by the hurricane. The two nuns go and pick up the children and provide them with schooling during the week. On Saturday, they had all the children and their families over for a retreat. One of the girls on our team, Maria, who was from Ohio, and I had the opportunity to play and spend time with the children. As we were leaving to head towards downtown New Orleans, one of the girls gave us each hugs and pleaded to have us take her with us back to our homes. After explaining that we couldn't do that, she told us to wait a minute. She had participated in an egg hunt earlier in the afternoon. She went over to the eggs she had



Despite the heat, they're still working hard on the roof.

collected (which was about 5) and gave both Maria and I an egg. I found it amazing that a little girl who has nothing in her life was still able to love unconditionally and share with others. If only we could all reach out like that.

Saturday night we ate in the city and got ready to leave on Sunday.

This trip was a great experience, and I look forward to getting involved in a similar experiences soon.

To view more of Nina's photographs go to <http://community.webshots.com/user/nawright89>

IOCC will be working in the Gulf Coast through the end of July. If anyone would like to make this trip to the Gulf Coast - the cost is just \$300 - log on to [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org) and click on "Get Involved."



Pansy Street, St. Tammany West, the Habitat homes in progress.



Half way done shingling--on the first side of the house!



A rooftop view of the homes being built.



Attempting and figuring out how to cut the plywood.

## OCF Real Break 2008

### GUATEMALA & HOGAR RAFAEL AYAU

Fr. Marc Vranes

As has always been the case on a missionary trip, it is difficult to comprehend the immediate enormity of its impact. Many things I know not, yet I embrace fully the powerful loving hand of our Lord at the Hogar Rafael Ayau in the center of Guatemala City, which our Orthodox Christian Fellowship Real Break team visited March 8-15, 2008. Yet, in order to understand more fully what transpires within the city block of four, high concrete walls which are soiled and stained with the dirt and grime of many years, we must examine recent history.

Guatemala has often been fittingly described as a Third World Country, and indeed for several decades there has been a great degree of unconstrained lawlessness, even though a 1996 Peace Accord ended a 36-year civil war. Corrupt government administrations, the inability to prosecute criminals and implement an effective criminal justice system, have created an unbelievable humanitarian aid crisis for the vast majority of the population. There is so much fear among the people that, reportedly, most Guatemalans carry a loaded firearm for protection. It is rare to find an unarmed person, and even rarer to find a successful business that is not protected by armed guards with rifles. There was an armed guard in front of the upscale Crowne Plaza Hotel where we stayed the evening prior to our return, and I was certain that the weapon which was strapped over his left shoulder was a machine gun. The hotel concierge assured me however, that it was simply a high-powered rifle. Yet, that provided little comfort.

According to Marc Lacey of the *New York Times*, in a November 4, 2007, article,

Guatemala is a major transit route for cocaine moving from Columbia to the United States. Because of the extreme poverty, ruthless gangs have no trouble recruiting members, and they have operated unchecked for over a decade. Naturally, lawlessness like this keeps Guatemalans vigilant and on high alert. Nearly 6,000 killings occurred last year in a country the size of Rhode Island, giving Guatemala the distinction of having one of the highest murder rates in Latin America.

This is the kind of world facing the Orthodox orphans at the Hogar (Spanish for "home") which is named for its founder, Don Rafael Ayau.

However, the children at the Hogar are safe, for now. Their current home is a refuge, established by God's grace where the children can grow and find nourishment.

On the surface, all appears well. Yet, the incessant noise outside of the orphanage's gritty cement structure makes one realize immediately that the streets are mean, and fraught with danger. The orphans who are nurtured inside, in this warm womb of an environment, will eventually outgrow the orphanage and be faced with an unthinkable prospect of life on the streets.

The Hogar's 85 children—who range in age from infants to eighteen years old—have not only been rejected by their families, but worse, they have been abandoned altogether. Most of the children have been abused physically and sexually. It is perhaps unthinkable that children who have been so abused would still crave the human touch, let alone possess the ability to respond with such compassion, but, in fact, they do. It is precisely the healing power of the human touch which provides tangible confirmation of God's all-embracing

love. Yet the contrasts are severe.

Some of the children have radiant eyes which sparkle like black jade stone. Yet, the less fortunate have eyes that are dim, distant and bewildered, and their innocent faces are so etched with fear that it is difficult to look them. Too often their eyes offer a deep and penetrating look into a tortured past.

Yet in spite of so much sorrow and tragedy, through the loving, yet firm hand of Madre Ivonne, the administrator of the orphanage, the children are icons of resiliency. Resolve and ardent love are a powerful combination and are difficult to defeat.

Missionaries from throughout the world regularly visit this house of mercy, and have embraced its ministry of touch which serves as a powerful healing medicine. Embrace, and change take place in the lives of those who share love with one another. Hearts of stone are replaced by hearts that beat with God's love. Ironically, Mother Ivonne acknowledges that she is happiest when the children allow themselves to cry in public. She is not happy about their momentary distress, but rather, she is happy that the children are healthy enough to have emotions and feelings, and feel safe enough to express them openly.

Distant and lonely eyes soften and connect when people connect with the children without conditions. Often, it is as simple as holding a child's hand. This is the Lord's New Commandment, it is the offering of Christ's unconditional love, because this is how Christ loves us, and encourages us to love others: "even as he has loved us" (John 13:34).

It is nearly impossible to deceive these children. They

*Guatemala to 6*



Photo courtesy of  
[www.hogarrafaelayau.org](http://www.hogarrafaelayau.org)

*"...change takes place in the lives of those who share love with one another. Hearts of stone are replaced by hearts that beat with God's love."*

*Guatemala from 5*

have spent their lives reading the intent in another person's eyes. Perhaps this wonderful gift of discernment has been provided by God as a means of surviving a lifetime of abandonment and its accompanying daily pain. For the children, the ability to discern the intentions of others is a necessary condition for long-term survival.

The Hogar provides a holistic ministry to the orphans. With an Orthodox Church at its center, it has classrooms, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, music room, infirmary, and nursery for the infants. It provides schooling through Grade 10, then the student, if he wishes, must go to school somewhere else in Guatemala City.

Certainly, all the children's future is uncertain, at the very best. Still, there is hope.

There is a new Orthodox monastery under construction about an hour outside Guatemala City. At the center of the monastery is a magnificent church, built to the glory of God on the top of a mountain. The church was consecrated in November, 2007. By God's will and providence, it is hoped that in five years the new orphanage facility will be complete and all the children will be able to live in a much more peaceful and clean rural setting.

The Hogar exists solely through free-will offerings and philanthropy. The nuns *steadfastly* refuse any government assistance, since they wish to remain free from any type of political corruption. Future missionaries will continue to travel to the Hogar and perform works of love which will increase the likelihood that success stories will continue to be written.

Having visited this amazing house of Christian love and mercy, it terrifies me to think of the menacing and cold, cruel Guatemala City streets which surround this sanctuary for God's little ones. The powers of evil are so intent on annihilating Christ's presence, yet I have to trust that he will never abandon those He loves.

Dear Lord, please protect the nuns, the staff and the children at the Hogar Rafael Ayau. Keep them wrapped in the arms of your mother's warm embrace. Your abundant grace, and our fervent prayer, are the only means of defense for these orphans. Grant them a peaceful and joyful Christian life in Guatemala.

*Fr. Marc Vranes is pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Willimantic, CT.*



Photo courtesy of [www.hogarafaelayau.org](http://www.hogarafaelayau.org)

*Parenting from 6*

drew estimates that about eighty percent of the children from his parish have run into serious difficulties as young adults, and frequently they leave the Church. Often the pattern is that in high school, children follow the prevalent patterns of sexual experimentation which leads to tension with the teaching of the Church, and often they drift

away. He found himself asking, "Is there something that I am doing wrong as a pastor?"

He feels strongly that the underlying problem is that in our culture children are not

taught how to be free in a Christian sense of being free. According to Fr. Andrew, in strong families children are raised with tight rules and regulations which maintains some sense order in the household. Yet, the kids are obeying simply because they want the parents to get off of their backs. Outside of this kind of framework, there is total chaos, and parents are terrified of dealing with their children. The real question, however, is not about rules and discipline, but rather about love, Christian love. How do we raise our Children



Potluck meal after the meeting.

to love one another as Christ commanded? How do we instill in our children a practical, experiential way of living that is rooted in loving obedience to Jesus Christ?

Participants in the group have also dealt with questions about death and dying and ways to teach children the Christian meaning of death. There has also been much discussion regarding children's interaction with media. Another topic of interest is how to teach children, and the role of home schooling.

*Parenting to 7*



Whitfield from 3

though they had always been committed Christians, Lee and Manna did not feel as though they had found their true church home. In the years since college they attended several different churches, yet they always felt as though something was missing.

Then, in what Lee describes as a "moment of desperation" they visited Christ the Savior Orthodox Mission in Woodbury. At the time, the mission met in a small storefront, but the Whitfields soon realized that they had found their true home.

There had always been a great deal of Orthodox theology and spirituality in Lee's life, particularly since his days in college. But it was only in the Orthodox Church that all the different aspects of Christianity came into focus for him. On Pentecost, 2005 the entire Whitfield family was received into the Orthodox Church.

Lee describes the Orthodox Church as a place where ...one finds a remarkable clarity of vision in terms of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Once he and his family had



Manna and Lee Whitfield with their daughters, (from left to right) Miya, Ayame and Emi at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

been received into the Orthodox Church, the thought of going to seminary and serving the Church seemed a much more viable possibility. In discerning his call to serve, Lee not only consulted with his pastor, Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, and Bishop NIKON, but he also took a year off from teaching, to directly immerse himself in the life of the Church and to pray about going to seminary.

As he comes close to finishing his first year at seminary, Lee describes seminary life as

"great but exhausting." He and Manna work to keep a healthy balance in the midst of all the demands placed on seminarians and their families. Lee says that the signs of God's providence in his life are unmistakable and he is tremendously grateful to everyone who has helped and support him and his family as they have made this important transition. He is looking forward to serving the Church in whatever way God may call him to serve.

*"...it was only in the Orthodox Church that all the different aspects of Christianity came into focus"*



Parenting from 6

Fr. Caleb Abetti, who along with Fr. Andrew is a regular member of the group, said that the discussions often turn to questions of individuality. To what degree are children "individuals" and to what degree are they connected to their parents and their families. Fr. Caleb says that, "[Children] are

essentially downloading everything from their parents, and responding with this deep connection that is beyond comprehension." This has important ramifications on how parents and grandparents raise their children. Quoting the phrase from the anaphora of St. Basil's Liturgy in which we ask God to "make the evil to be good through Thy goodness" Fr. Caleb said that the group has discussed how we can redeem the darkness that occurs within our families and with our children.

Sometimes the group has read materials that touch on parenting and family life by authors such as Mother Magdalena, St. Theophan the Recluse and Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. But, the meetings are not so much "academic" as much as they are gatherings of brothers and sisters in Christ who have the opportunity to ask hard questions, share ideas and experiences, and ultimately support one another in the demanding vocation of raising children. Fr. Caleb said, "People can go away still

Parenting to 8



O.N.E.

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*Parenting from 7*

scratching their heads, or shaken up a bit. But even as nerve-racking as that can be, it can make a good impact with the kids as we look for a creative way to work with our children." He also notes that they always try to be very sensitive of people's feelings, so

that the meetings have depth and substance, but that everyone feels welcome and supported.

According to Fr. Andrew we prepare young people for marriage, yet we really do nothing to prepare them for raising children. He says, "This kind of ongoing discussion that we have is really essential. I per-

sonally wish that it could happen in every parish"

*If you are interested in learning more about the Parental Support Group of the Northern Deanery, or are interested in starting up a similar group, please contact Fr. Andrew Tregubov at 603-542-6273 frandrew@tregubovstudios.com*

## Upcoming Events

### **Pastoral Medical Bioethics Symposium For Clergy and Clergy Wives**

**May 10, 2008 St. Nicholas Church Southbridge, MA 8:30 am to 4:30 pm**

Keynote Speaker: Fr. John Breck Priest, Lecturer and Author on Biomedical Ethics

The Symposium will focus on both "Beginning of Life" and "End of Life" issues along with their pastoral dimensions and consequences. The Symposium will also have workshops that focus on dealing with specific situations.

*For more information contact Protodeacon Basil Andruchow 11 Carson Street Saugus, MA 01906*

### **Special Diocesan Assembly**

**Wednesday, May 21, 2008 at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT at 7:00 p.m**

With the blessing of His Grace, our Bishop NIKON, at the request of the Diocesan Council, a Special Assembly has been called to respond, as a Diocese, in a definitive manner, positively or negatively, to the recommendation of the Diocesan Residence Committee to authorize the Diocesan Council to sell the Diocesan Residence in Cumberland, RI.

*For more information contact Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor: 860-364-1070 fjkkreta@snet.net*