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Remembering His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon

Archbishop Nikon stands with Father Sergius Halvorsen at the St. Nectarios Celebration of Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, in 2014.



V. Rev. Sergius Halvorsen

[This article was first published on the OCA website and is republished with permission.]

I first met Archbishop Nikon in Pennsylvania at a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Since I was not serving, I went in to the altar for clergy communion. After receiving Metropolitan Herman's blessing, I stepped aside to put on my vestments and I found myself standing next to a big, tall hieromonk with rugged features, and a deeply lined, unsmiling face. In the mental calculus of

meeting a stranger, I wondered if this was someone that I should even talk to. He wasn't serving, but was standing in the altar, attentively observing the service, and I honestly didn't know if I should even disturb him. But, before receiving communion, I said, "I'm sorry Father, but I don't think we've met," and I introduced myself. He responded, "Hello. I'm Father Nikon, they say they want to make me a bishop, so I'm here to watch and learn." He gently shrugged

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Orthodox Education Grant: St Nicholas Orthodox Church in Pittsfield, Mass.

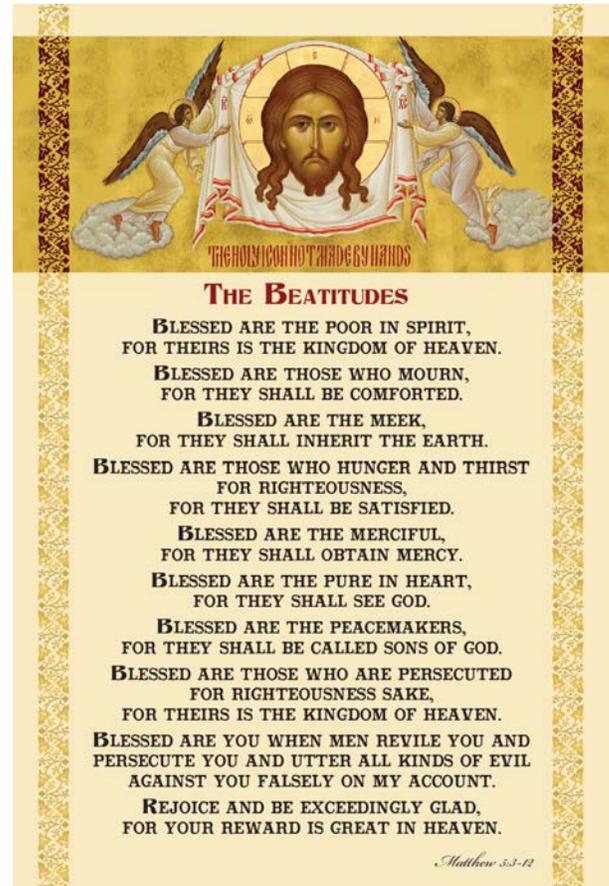
by Irene Vassos

For several years now at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Pittsfield, Mass., my fellow parishioner, Nicholas Bobrovsky, has lamented that we as Orthodox do not have enough knowledge about our Church and its traditions, nor do we have the confidence when speaking to others about our faith. He means a basic foundation from which we can speak both intelligently and with confidence to both our Orthodox brothers and sisters and to those folks who may stop in on a Sunday morning to check us out! As a member of the Diocesan Council I urged him to write a grant that would support our efforts to create ways to reach both our own parishioners and visitors.

The result will be a series of 34 large, 26" x 36", colorful posters that we intend to hang on the walls of our Fellowship Hall—two rooms in our currently empty rectory as we wait for a priest to be assigned to our parish. Coincidentally, two weeks ago we honored Nick and his wife Marina on his 90th birthday to name these rooms the “Nicholas and Marina Bobrovsky Hall” in honor of their many years of service and hospitality to our church community.

Originally Nick thought that we would be creating multimedia resources, including DVDs that people could borrow. But as organizing the project began to take shape it became easier and more effective to create large posters. He chose topics he deemed

Above: One of the educational posters featuring the Beatitudes is shown, much reduced in scale. They were created by Tanya Bogaevsckaya for St. Nicholas, Pittsfield. Other examples of this beautiful project are shared later in this issue of the ONE.



were important foundations and traditions of Orthodoxy, and he formed a small Education Grant Committee. He then enlisted as many parishioners as possible to research, write, and submit material for the posters. Tanya Bogaevsckaya our choir director and a graphic designer created the posters.

The project's goal was threefold:

- Provide an easy way for parishioners to improve their knowledge about Orthodox faith, worship, traditions and customs by enlisting their help in doing the research!

- Utilize visual displays, i.e., posters, to give brief answers to basic questions related to the Orthodox faith. Writers were encouraged to use online sources, books, seminaries and libraries.
- Create simple posters to facilitate explaining orthodoxy to children, adults and visitors and make these posters attractive and easy to read.

Nick corralled as many parishioners as he could, distributed topic assignments, told them to use whatever resources they needed, including simple web searches, Wikipedia, YouTube, books, other print and audio materials. When parishioners handed in their assignments he distributed the drafts to the grant committee of five people and two priests for review. The final documents were then passed on to Tanya to create a poster from each document.

Topics for the posters include: Time Line of Orthodoxy, the Beatitudes, the Creed, Memorial Service, the Cross, Major Feasts, Sacraments, Priest Vestments, the Hierarchy of the OCA, the Orthodox Church, Incense, Autocephaly, Orthodox Teaching, the Altar Table, Proskophora, the Clergy, the OCA Today, Becoming an Orthodox Christian, the Meaning of Icons, Candles, Church Banners, Church Architecture, the Iconostasis and Royal Doors, Orthodox Fasting, Church Participation, Church Music, the Church Calendar, Preparation for Holy Communion, Canonization, Types of Liturgies, Sacred Vessels, an Outline of the Divine Liturgy, the Proskomedia, and Vestments of Bishops and Deacons.

Nick and the committee considered the limitations of the project. Did we have sufficient wall space for the displays—and how should we arrange them? He had to estimate the time needed to collect the material, give it to proofreaders and create the posters. The committee was burdened by the constraints of COVID-19. How could we ensure the consistency of topics from so many different sources? What about the vast diversity of the volunteer researchers and how do we project the evenness of collecting material from different sources? And what about controversies that might arise in the interpretation of material?

The result has been eye-catching and eye-opening! We are proud of the collective work from so many people and the result that educating ourselves helps us to engage more with the principals of our faith. We sometimes question the balance between tradition — and how traditions vary amidst a myriad of ethnicities and historical practices—and core Orthodox theology.

Nick is hoping to roll out the presentation of the posters during Fellowship Hour, as soon as it is safe to resume these gatherings. Realizing the limitations of what a poster can represent we hope to develop supplemental information available as handouts for each poster, giving more in-depth information and pointing observers to additional resources. In the meantime here are samples of the posters. We are grateful to the contributors and to the editors who helped to bring this project to fruition and to the Diocese for funding the grant.

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SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn., Upgrades Audio & Video with Grant

Rev. Joshua Mosher

SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, Meriden, Conn., received a Diocesan Grant this summer to support our online outreach efforts. We had been streaming services from home during the first few months of COVID, but by Pentecost we took the first small steps toward reopening. We immediately found that streaming from the church had many challenges. While we did have an internet connection in the basement, we had no way for it to reach the nave, and certainly not to the choir loft, where we planned to set up our videocamera. We had an audio system from a few decades ago, which needed significant upgrades and also needed to be connected to the camera in the loft. We used a smart phone on a tripod initially for capturing both audio and video, which was barely adequate for the Divine Liturgy.

The grant allowed us to purchase a decent camera and the supporting equipment and software to remedy these challenges. We had to adjust our plans along the way, as we found that our audio system needed much more attention and we required a new complement of microphones for the choir. Rick Comshaw provided much expertise and the lion's share of the labor, with key assistance from Radu Alecsandru on this audio project. Meanwhile, Elias Mosher worked hard on the online side, to establish a reliable system for people to participate

remotely in our services. Improvements have continued throughout the summer and into the fall, and the feedback has shifted from long-suffering patience with poor video and terrible sound at the beginning, to recent compliments on the quality.

Online participation in services can never replace worshipping in the Lord's temple, but it is a valuable resource in this current era. It is a measure of solace for those who have to remain isolated for health reasons, or who have to quarantine for a couple of weeks. Even some of our long-time shut-ins have been able to participate, which is a joy to us all.

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Below: An educational poster from St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, on **The Meaning of Icons**.



THE MEANING OF ICONS
WHAT ARE ICONS?

Icons are representations of the Heavenly. They are expressions of Orthodox Faith, teaching, and worship. The Greek word for "Icon" is, "Hagiography," which can be separated into two words:

- Hagios, meaning Holy or not of this world (Heavenly)
- Graphia, meaning to write

Therefore, icons are not drawings or creations of imagination. They are in fact writings of things not of this world. Icons can represent our Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints. They can also represent the Holy Trinity, Angels, the Heavenly hosts, and even events. Orthodox icons, unlike Western pictures, change the perspective and form of the image so that it is not naturalistic. This is done so that we can look beyond appearances of the world, and instead look to the spiritual truth of the holy person or event. Icons can only be created with the blessing of the Church, as they are writings of Truth.

PURPOSE OF ICONS

The Orthodox Church uses icons to assist in worship. Icons are a 'window to heaven' and they help us to focus on the divine things. While the icons still contain material aspects, like paint and colour, we are taught not to reject our physical life but instead to transform it, as was done by the holy people represented by the icons. It is important to note that the icons themselves are venerated only, not worshipped; we only worship God in the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Remembering continued from I

his shoulders, and his rugged lined face, broke into a completely unexpected, playfully bashful smile. It was the kind of smile that said, “This is all a bit overwhelming, but it’s going to be OK.”

The second time I saw him was shortly after his episcopal consecration. I was asked to serve with then Bishop Nikon as he made a pastoral visit to a local parish in Connecticut. I had been a deacon for a few years and I had just

enough experience serving the hierarchical Divine Liturgy so that I would occasionally be asked to serve as the first deacon when a more senior deacon was unavailable, but I did not have enough experience to be truly comfortable. So, whenever I served with a bishop, I was always nervous, hoping and praying that I’d remember everything, and more importantly, that I’d be able to do it all. But as the Liturgy began, I quickly realized that since His Grace had only recently been consecrated to the episcopacy, he and I were in a similar situation: neither of us was completely familiar with the hierarchical liturgy. There were a few moments when it seemed that we were both a bit unsure of exactly what we should be doing—subtle looks back and forth that said, “Wait, is it my turn now, or is it yours...no wait, am I supposed to be here, or over there...?” But while there may have been some uncertainty about the rubrics, one thing was absolutely certain: Bishop Nikon was making everyone feel completely at ease. From the pastor of the parish, whose chronic illness posed challenges that I cannot even imagine, to the subdeacons, to the altar boys, and of course to me, the nervous, not-so-confident deacon: Bishop Nikon went out of his way to make everyone feel completely at ease. He was kind, humble, patient, and greeted every unforeseen moment graciously and with a gentle sense of humor, and yes, there were several moments when he looked at us with that playfully bashful smile that said, “This is all a bit overwhelming, but it’s going to be OK.” In the years after that, as I had the pleasure to serve and work with Vladyka Nikon in the Diocese of New England, I learned that the spirit of humble, gentle, compassion with which he served the Liturgy, character-

Congratulations to FORCC Scholarship Winners!

M. Lydia Westerberg

Erin Galich from St. George Albanian Orthodox Church in Trumbull is the recipient of the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut (FORCC) \$1,000 George Hallas Memorial Scholarship this year. Erin will study psychology with the aim of attaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Central Connecticut State University.

Matthew McGovern from St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church in Bridgeport is the recipient of the \$1,000.00 George Hallas Memorial Scholarship.

Matthew will study mechanical engineering with the aim of attaining a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Connecticut.

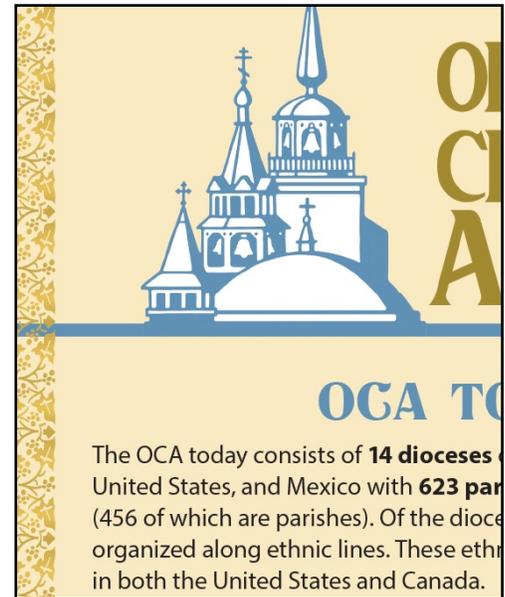
We wish our students many blessings. The students will be invited to the FORCC banquet to be held at St. Dimitrie’s Church Hall on October 3, 2021.

Donations to FORCC can be made to: FORCC Treasurer, 95 S. Orchard Street, Wallingford, CT 06492. **ONE +**

ized his entire ministry. He served Christ and His Holy Church by treating people with kindness, humility, patience and grace. Every time I we sang “Eis polla, eti despota” for him, he would always give his blessing, and then say, loud enough so that everyone could hear, “Many years to you as well.”

At the end of that first Liturgy that I served with Bishop Nikon, he gave me his blessing, and thanked me profusely for coming to serve with him. Then he said, “Father Deacon, come here for just a minute.” We walked to his car where he was packing up his things, and he pulled out the bouquet of flowers that the parish had given him as they greeted him in the narthex. He said, “Father, please take these home and give them to your wife. Please tell her that I send my blessing, and that I’m grateful to her for sharing you on a Sunday morning.” This was the first of many times that Bishop Nikon went out of his way to express his love and care for my family and every time we spoke, he would always ask about my wife and my children. Once when a family member had a bit of a health scare, I was sitting in my car, in a parking lot, beside myself with fear and anxiety, and I called him to ask for his prayers. Naturally, he told me that he’d pray for us. But in that moment, I knew he was sincere in his prayer, because he was such a good listener. When you talked with Bishop Nikon, he really listened to you, and he let you know that he heard and understood you. Now, there is a not-so-subtle irony to all of this, because Archbishop Nikon was notoriously hard of hearing. It seemed like he was always in a losing battle with his hearing aids—tweaking and adjusting them, while they whistled and squeaked—and there were plenty of times when you would tell him something and he would ask you to

Above: A highlight of an educational poster from St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, on **The Orthodox Church in America Today.**



repeat yourself. But people who are not listening to you, people who don’t care what you are saying, people who don’t care what you’re going through, they never ask you to repeat yourself, because they don’t care. But if Archbishop Nikon didn’t understand something you said, he would ask you to repeat yourself, squinting his eyes in concentration, with his hand up to his ear, leaning in closer, hoping to catch what you were saying. He cared about what you were going through, and he wanted to hear. Perhaps being physically hard of hearing forced Archbishop Nikon to be a more attentive listener; maybe it forced him to listen carefully, to make sure that he understood what his people were telling him, and to assure them that he heard and understood their concerns, ideas, hopes and fears. Vladyka may have been hard of hearing, but whatever his ears lacked was more than made up for by his heart.

One of the reasons Vladyka Nikon was such a good listener, was because he was always present. He seemed to be on the road constantly: traveling to parishes to serve and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to be present at

every possible gathering of the faithful. He particularly loved visiting the diocesan Youth Rally, and he'd leave his house before dawn to make the drive up to the camp in New Hampshire, spend the entire day with the Rallyers, and then drive all the way home in the evening. In the years that he spent caring for the Diocese of the South, his travel schedule was even more intense, and he logged God-knows-how-many miles by air and by car. Brother clergy would tell me that it was not uncommon to arrive at church for a service to find Archbishop Nikon waiting in his little black car, not impatient or testy, but simply there: present. No matter the "grandeur" of the particular event, it could be a major Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, or a panikhida for the father of a priest in his diocese, Vladyka was always there: he was present for his people. He lived out this desire to be present, almost to a fault and on several occasions he worked himself to the point of extreme exhaustion. Some of us took it upon ourselves to tell him to slow down, "Vladyka, you are my bishop, and I know that I'm not in a position to tell you what to do, but I'm telling you, 'Take some time off!' please. Stay home, get some rest. We know you love us, but we want you to be well." Archbishop Nikon's commitment to spend time with his people, even at the expense of his health, is a striking icon of Christian love. He was not perfect—those who knew him well, knew his weaknesses and his failings, and he was quick to admit them, and ask forgiveness—yet he seemed to care more for the wellbeing of those he served, than for himself: his ministry embodied a profoundly Christlike selflessness that placed the wellbeing of the neighbor before his own.

The last time I saw Archbishop Nikon was in the summer of 2019, and

he was living in a convalescent facility. Walking into his room, I was stunned to see him so frail. But in usual Archbishop Nikon fashion, he was there waiting for me. He knew I was coming, so he had gotten ready and was sitting up on the side of his bed ready to receive me when I got there. So many years after our first meeting in Pennsylvania, that big, tall, imposing man was now a shadow of his former self, yet even in that condition, he was no longer a stranger: he was my archbishop, my father in Christ, and my trusted friend. As we talked, he said over and over, how much he wished that he could regain his strength so that he could once again visit the parishes in his diocese and spend time among his brothers and sisters in Christ. In his usual self-deprecating humor, he said, "But father, right now I'm so weak, if I put on all those vestments, I probably couldn't even stand." As always, he asked me about my family, and he took such joy in hearing about what my wife and children were doing. At one point, his tone changed, and he looked me straight in the eyes and said, "Father, I'm ready for my wife to come and take me home." For a split second I thought perhaps in his weakness he had become disoriented, but then I knew exactly what he was saying. His beloved wife Sarah had departed this life almost twenty years earlier. He had had their wedding rings mounted on the top of his favorite episcopal walking staff, and those who knew him, knew that her spirit was never far from his. Maybe that grief of losing someone so dear was one of the things that made him such a good bishop. As the Psalmist says, a broken and contrite heart is an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. So, sitting on the side of his hospital bed, in that care facility in Boston, on that July afternoon, when he said that he

was ready for his wife to come take him home, I knew he was telling me that the time of his earthly sojourn was drawing to a close, and that he welcomed the opportunity to be reunited with his loved ones in Christ.

Barely a month after that last visit, I found myself at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Boston at Archbishop Nikon's funeral. There were so many priests present for the service that most of us stood in the nave, fully vested, lined up on either side of our beloved Archbishop Nikon who lay in repose in the center of the Church. Unlike that first time that he and I served together (when we were both so concerned about the details of the service) I found myself in a very unusual situation for a priest: my only job was to stand still and pray. Looking at Archbishop Nikon, my mind was filled with all of the moments that we spent together: the challenges we had to deal with, the sorrows we faced, the trust that grew between us, and the genuine friendship and the Christian love that we shared. A bishop is like an adoptive father: he comes into your life, and there is a formal, working relationship. At first, you don't have a personal relationship. But when your bishop is a man of faith, when he is loving and kind, when he comes to ministry with a broken and contrite heart, when he embodies the love of Jesus Christ, then he becomes a father. That is what made saying good bye to Archbishop Nikon so very hard for so many of us, we were not simply burying our diocesan bishop, we were saying goodbye to our father in Christ and commending him into the hands of God. As these thoughts ran through my mind, I remembered one of the most beautiful teachings of our Orthodox Christian faith: in the same way that we can ask for the prayers of the living, we can, and should, ask for the

prayers of those who have departed this life. So in my heart, I began to pray, "Holy Father Nikon, pray to God for us." Then suddenly, I could practically hear his voice, that gravelly deep voice, with that subtle touch of gentle irony that was such an endearing part of his ministry, and I could swear that I almost heard him say, "Father, what kind of bishop do you think I am? Do you think that I'm going to stop praying for you just because I'm dead?" And then, in my mind's eye, I could see that expression on his face, that playfully bashful smile that said, "This is all a bit overwhelming, but it's going to be OK."

At Archbishop Nikon's funeral, a good friend and I were talking, and suddenly he broke down in tears, and sobbed, "I'm just going to miss him so much...so very much!" Over the past year, with my own personal struggles and the struggles that we've all faced through the pandemic, I've thought so many times about how much I miss Archbishop Nikon, and I've thought how much I wish that he were still with us. But I've also thought of how much he gave us. How he left us his amazing witness of Christian faith, and the witness of his simple and profound example of Christlike love. Most importantly, I am reminded that inasmuch as I draw close to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I am once again close to our beloved Archbishop Nikon who continues to pray for us.

Thank you, Lord, for sending Archbishop Nikon to care for us, to share Your love with us to and lead us. Thank You for granting us an archpastor who helped us to take up our cross and follow You. Grant rest and blessed repose O Lord, to your servant, the ever-memorable Archbishop Nikon, and make his memory to be eternal!

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Diocese Helps St. Jacob's in Vermont to Stream Worship Online

V. Rev. Mark Korban

St Jacob Mission gratefully received a grant for \$2000 from our diocesan fund to help us install live-stream capability. Along with a generous donation from a parishioner, we were able to purchase equipment and install an internet service. There is a lot of different equipment available so we are grateful to Dn Gregory Uhrin from Holy Resurrection parish in Claremont, NH for his expertise in choosing equipment and installing it properly. It was quite the adventure running microphone wire through the attic and crawl space in the church. We managed to get all the microphone and camera feeds to one control panel in the sacristy. From there it was connected to the internet. We have a piece called an encoder which enables the signals to be synchronized and sent to the Youtube channel. It took several weeks of effort to get the encoder to communicate properly with the Youtube channel. It seemed perplexing at the time, but once we saw what the issue was,



Above: The new videocamera has been installed above the entrance into the nave of St. Jacob's.

Below: The new equipment for mixing sound and streaming the resulting video is now installed in the parish sacristy.



it was simple to fix. Finally in early August we were able to stream our first vespers service. Needless to say some adjustment in the camera and sound control were needed. Now it seems to be working well. The feedback we are getting from parishioners is encouraging although some people don't like the idea of streaming services to begin with. From my perspective I think it's the best we can do given the obstacles of the present time. After the pandemic is over, it will still be helpful to shut-ins and the sick. We are thankful to all who made this project a reality. Our hope and prayer is that it will be to God's glory.

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Congratulations to World War II Veteran at 75th Anniversary

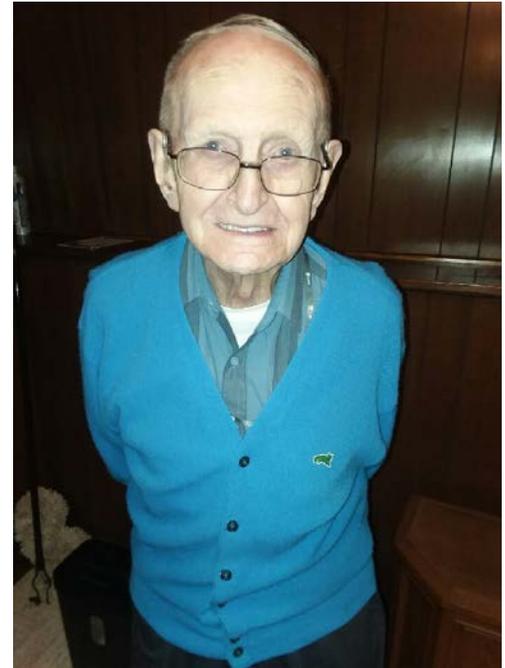
M. Lydia Westerberg

Parishioners from Holy Transfiguration, New Haven, along with friends and relatives and citizens of the Czech Republic, are proud to congratulate Robert Muthersbaugh on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen and Western Czechoslovakia by the United States Army. Pilsen is the capital city of the Czech Republic's western region of Bohemia.

In May 1945, the US Third Army, led by General George Patton, entered Pilsen to liberate the Czech people from six years of occupation by Nazi Germany. To this day the citizens of Pilsen show immense gratitude to the United States Army. Every year the citizens of Pilsen hold a festival celebrating the liberation and many people, including United States veterans, arrive from all over the world.

In January of this year, the Czech government made arrangements to celebrate the 75th anniversary celebration in New York City to enable as many veterans as possible to attend without traveling the distance to the Czech Republic. The affair was held at the Czech Center, National Bohemian Hall.

Among other Pilsen attendees were Ivan Rollinger, curator of the Patton Museum in Pilsen; Jan Engler, Deputy City Mayor of Pilsen; and the Councilwoman from the Czech Republic. All arrived to pay tribute to our United States veterans who changed the lives of the citizens of



Pilsen during that turning point in World War II.

Robert Muthersbaugh, from Hamden, Conn., was accompanied by his great granddaughter. In 1945, Robert was Chief Radio Operator serving in the 16th Armored Division of the Third Army. Robert was honored to have been invited to this gala celebration by the Czech government and he was particularly moved to be recognized by the grandson of General Patton himself. Robert is now ninety-nine years old. Robert is a faithful parishioner at Holy Transfiguration Church.

We are grateful to those who show valor in difficult times and at their own peril.

May our Lord bless Robert Muthersbaugh.

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105th Anniversary of Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, N.H.

M. Anne Sherman

In late September, the parishioners of Holy Resurrection Church in Berlin, N.H., celebrated their 105th anniversary. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the anniversary was a local celebration rather than a more widely advertised and attended event. About 26 people were present on a sunny and warm day with stunning Fall colors at the peak of foliage season. The sanctuary was beautiful with large arrangements of wild flowers and bouquets of fall flowers from a local shop.

Liturgy was served by Fr. Mark Sherman and Protodeacon Zachary Wasuta. During the talk at the Liturgy, Fr. Mark recalled events from Holy Resurrection's history, beginning as a Church serving eastern European workers at the lumber and paper mills, struggling greatly during



the 1930s and 1960s from the Great Depression and attrition at the paper mills, and looking to a bright future as Berlin becomes a destination for a work force that can work remotely.

Following Liturgy, a joyous meal was enjoyed outside on the grounds of the Church. Proper Covid-19 precautions were taken for food preparation, food distribution, and spacing on the Church grounds. The event proved an opportunity for the fellowship of being together and a blessing for all, as Holy Resurrection, served by Protodeacon Zachary, looks forward to continued celebration of the Faith in the years to come.

ONE †



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