

O. N. E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Right: The parish of Holy Trinity, Springfield, assembles before their new food chapel.

St. Herman of Alaska Food Chapel Springfield, Vt., parish builds something beautiful



Thomas Barton

On July 11th, we at Holy Trinity in Springfield, Vermont, blessed our new Food Chapel, dedicated to St. Herman of Alaska. The idea for this wonderful outreach was brought to us by Fr. Mircea, who with his wife, Matushka Sarah, came up with the idea while enjoying some rare time alone at a small coffee shop near their home in Heniker, N.H.. Inside the shop they noticed to the left of the entrance some

shelves along with a small fridge. The shelves were lined with vegetables and canned goods as well as other food items. A sign next to it read, "Free food. If you need it, take it."

Then and there the inspiration came to Father and Matushka to have something similar at our parish. If something as simple as

Chapel continued on 8

In Memoriam:

A reflection on Mitered Archbishop Michael Koblosh

V. Rev. Marc Vranes

On a cold but dry day in January, 1986, the first Sunday and on the fifth day of the month, I traveled unsuspectingly to a small parish located in a residential neighborhood in Terryville, Connecticut. I had decided, much earlier, that when an opportunity came along to visit another church, it was best for me not to have any expectations. Better to be pleasantly surprised, rather than to be extremely disappointed. A native New Englander I was not, so I knew nothing of the church community, or the priest; his name was all I knew. Before Liturgy began, I found a corner of the church to tuck myself into, an inconspicuous spot that I would claim as my personal space for the next six years.

The church had a deacon and the choir sang prayerfully, I remember. Eventually, the gospel was proclaimed; then it was time for the sermon.

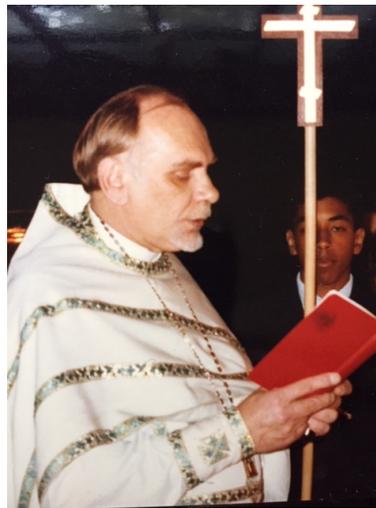
The priest, I can recall with clarity, spoke in a way that I had not heard any priest speak since my seminary days. He spoke of Resurrection, of an affirmed Christ, of Eucharist, and of eternal life in God's Kingdom. He encouraged his parishioners to

look at life through those lenses, and then everything would be clearer. His discourse closed with a matter-of-fact volley, made in his inimitable booming voice, "Now you can't say you don't know, because now you do; now go do something about it."

If a person has only one chance to make a good first impression, then Father Michael Koblosh had exceeded far beyond any hope that I may have had. I was hooked; I needed more of this type of preaching. At the conclusion of Liturgy and at the veneration of the cross, Father Michael invited me over to the rectory so he could learn more about this 6'4" visitor. We spent a long

time talking, then he told me – he didn't ask – that I would be giving the sermon the following Sunday; so, I did, as I was commanded. And after that Liturgy, he informed me: "You're going to be giving the sermon the second Sunday of each month from now on." The option to discuss this matter further or decline altogether, was not presented.

After struggling mightily for two years to find a parish that I could feel comfortable in, I knew I had found my new home. This was paradise, on a small street corner, in a simple, rural town with only one road in, and



Right: Fr. Michael Koblosh at the Paschal Procession.

one road out, and with a population then of less than 5,000 people. How could this be, I wondered? The answer became increasingly obvious: Father Michael Koblosh.

In the ensuing years I was to become one of the many clergy who discovered in Father Michael their spiritual guide, a mentor, and someone to pattern their own priesthood after. Since his death in August, 2021, I have found myself asking what made him different, so special, so unique and unforgettable. I offer two reasons why:

First, Father Michael only had allies, he had no adversaries; no one was a threat to his pastorate, just someone who could help him grow the church wherever God had planted him. I have discovered that some clergy may perceive a seminary-educated person, or another priest, as a threat. Father Michael perceived no one as a threat. Seminarians found him to be brilliant, a scholar, a theologian; all wrapped up in a humble and simple priest (he always wore boat shoes, even when serving), who many times was simply searching for his next cup of coffee: he took it with cream & sugar; no decaf for him.

He was able to identify a role for each of his supporters, so that more fruit, low hanging & sweet-tasting fruit, began to blossom forth from Father Michael's tree. There are many who drank from the fountain of his deep theological reservoir, and are ever grateful they did. This could not possibly have happened if he saw anyone as a threat. No threats, only another co-worker in the vineyard; that was Father Michael Koblosh.

And second, Father Michael had pastoral presence. He was just always there and communicated the love of Christ simply by his presence and the way he comported himself; always as a

servant of God. Father Michael's demeanor allowed him to have a special charisma which served to attract others to him. Father Michael didn't always offer sweet niceties, yet he would give silent affirmation that I was respected; he did not however, look favorably that I was influenced by the writings of Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

In 1992, nine years after finishing my seminary studies, I became aware of a warm sensation in my heart; I did not know what to make of it. A few days later over breakfast at the Golden Key Restaurant in Bristol, he said abruptly, "That's your calling to the priesthood. Go home and call the bishop."

I did as I was instructed to. The following week he drove me to Rhode Island to meet with Bishop Job [since Archbishop, reposed—ed.] where ordination plans were discussed. I often wondered if he drove me to Cumberland so that I would not change my mind? I was to learn under Father Michael; he became my mentor. He said he would teach me to serve the Liturgy in the Russian tradition. All I wanted to be the priest that he was. After my ordination to the priesthood, Father Michael asked me to join him in growing a newly established mission in Southbury. At my first Liturgy there, he noted that I had cut a very large Lamb to be used for Holy Communion. He walked behind me, took a look, and remarked with a light but suitable touch: "Who are you communing, the Russian Army?"

Over the next 25 years, Father Michael and I would share a periodic email and an occasional phone call, though life got in the way and our communication with one another began to wane. His influence on me however, did not. More recently, we

would compare chemotherapy notes; together we learned that misery loves company. Although our contact was limited in recent times (my bad), I always felt his presence when I stood before the Holy Altar.

I felt that pastoral presence once more during the pandemic. When our own little church in Willimantic was closed from mid-March to the end of June, 2020, every Sunday I watched the livestream Divine Liturgy from All Saints of North America Mission in Virginia. Why would I look elsewhere? When I heard that booming voice again, and he would be locked into one of his deep, theological sermons, I was there again, right by his side, just like the old days in Terryville and Southbury. No time had lapsed between us, I affirmed. Over the years, in every weekly bulletin, Father Michael wrote a Spiritual Reflection; and now I do, too, imitation being the sincerest form of flattery.

In considering the impact Father Michael has left on the Orthodox Church in America, it must be noted that his influence would have been far less impactful had his wife, Nadia, not just by his side, but oftentimes out in



front. Nadia was frequently the first point of contact when a seeker or visitor came into church. She was there to extend the initial welcome, the first person to invite someone to Coffee Hour. “Jeff would love to meet you,” Nadia would say. “Stick around until he comes down.”

Perhaps some could find Father Michael a bit distant; he wasn't always warm and fuzzy. His mind could be engaged elsewhere, yet I reasoned that was because he was thinking of his next sermon. He had a brilliant mind, and he was always engaged in thought; academics are like that. In time, you would warm to him. Nadia was different; she was as unforgettable and unique as he was. If you loved Nadia, and it was so easy to because of the interest that she took in you, then you would come to love Father Michael.

On the first Sunday I served the Divine Liturgy after Father Michael's death, I cut the largest Lamb I ever have in nearly three decades of priestly ministry, even larger than the one I cut in May, 1993; it was majestic. It was my way to honor him and to indicate to him the impact he had on my priesthood. No, it was not to commune the Russian Army, not now, not then, but it was done to acknowledge the Holy Eucharist and the life-giving cup that we must always drink from, which was the center of Father Michael's burning theological mind.

I took a step back and looked at the size of that Lamb; my mind raced back to my first Liturgy with him by my side.

I smiled. I gave thanks.

I don't suspect I will ever forget him.

Memory Eternal. Christ is Risen.

Fr. Michael Koblosh: a personal reflection

V. Rev. Vladimir Aleandro

Recently, while visiting a church during vacation, a man spoke to me afterwards and reacquainted himself as someone who I had worked with thirty years ago during Youth Rally in Cumberland R.I. At the end of our conversation he said: "I am so grateful because this has helped me connect the dots in my Life Journey.

If we saw our lives as a journey from the beginning to the present spot we are at now, it could be like a maze made up of dots. Along the way would be spots where decisions were made that either lead us on the path toward the final goal or elaborately lead to dead ends and other goals. At some of these pivotal points there may appear the figure of a person who was instrumental in choosing the turns in our life maze.

If such a maze could be multidimensional and entitled something like God's Providence or Journey to The Kingdom, it would encompass a galaxy of lives and communities that are intertwined. In reflecting on the role of Fr. Michael Koblosh in my Journey for the past forty-two years, I have come to learn, appreciate and love him for his presence. I believe any one who has ever encountered him will have a remembrance of him in their journey.

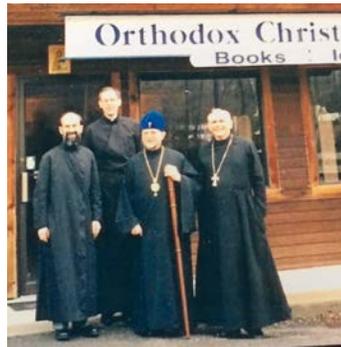
On that maze of my journey there would be a giant mark on Palm Sunday, 1979. Our parish in Ansonia was going through a pastoral transition. Circumstances brought us to Terryville. Liturgy was being celebrated in the brick

Church Hall on the corner until the new church was built. A hall, transformed by Fr. Michael into a sacred place set up with handwritten icons, exuding an atmosphere of beauty, attention to detail and love. That day my wife, infant daughter and myself were somewhat like the emissaries sent to Constantinople by Prince Vladimir. That Koblosh touch would be magnified in a living room, Episcopal church hall, Store Fronts in Southbury and Alexandria, Virginia and finally a Methodist Church Hall in Alexandria. At the end of Liturgy he held up the branches of Victory and challenged his flock to not be hypocrites but choose the Kingdom of their crucified and risen King. At Coffee Hour he sat with us and in his very forthright way said: "Come during the Services of this Holy Week

and make this your home."

We did, from that day and for the next twelve years. After Coffee Hour he told us to come over to the house for coffee. It was our first taste of that Koblosh hospitality that would build community from a most diverse group of people. The experiences of that day speak volumes of a true missionary and the personality of his charisma.

It has always amazed me that Fr. Michael could offer such a sense of stability yet embrace change. Every Sunday I would enter church looking for what was different. He said to me once, keep changing things a bit so people remain flexible. Traveling the Journey with Fr. Michael meant being flexible



Right: Fr. Michael Koblosh stands with Metropolitan Theodosius, and not-yet-priests Marc Vranes and Vladimir Aleandro before the bookstore that served as the home of Christ the Savior Mission for many years.

and ready for challenge at the most unexpected times.

After joining the parish I got a phone call one day asking if I still had my cassock from my former life. Why? Oh, Bishop Job is coming on the Memorial Day weekend and will tonsure you a Reader. A few weeks later he said one Saturday: "You will preach tomorrow." One January evening in 1986 after blessing our house, he encouraged me to take courses part time at St. Vladimir's. When I said that I left all that behind, he said just take one evening class at a time and see what happens.

On my maze there would have to be points with Fr. Michael holding a phone. On Monday evening, June 10, 1991, Father called to say that we would be having Liturgy in our Living Room the following Sunday — just the Koblosh and Aleandro families. Bishop Job gave his blessing. Just two years before another priest tried to start a Mission in Southbury by having Weekly Vespers. It was declared not feasible and over. Fr. Michael believed that we must begin with Liturgy and be faithful to it. His famous words were the guidance through some very discouraging times: "If it is of God, it will work; if not, we did our part by trying."

Seven months later, another evening phone call said that he had paper work for me to fill out because Bishop Job would be ordaining me to the Diaconate in our little store-front chapel on February 1. In 1995 I knew I was not ready to be ordained a priest and pastor the Mission. Fr. Michael, along with Fr. Tom Hopko made it clear: "If you are not ready now, you

never will be.... God works through our weakness." As any good father, as any good leader—as our heavenly Father—Fr. Michael saw potential, encouraged and knew no bounds in helping.

During these forty two years the most powerful and lasting touch was that warm and secure embrace across the shoulders in confession as Fr. Michael would say: "How are you doing?" No matter what then poured out he would speak his favorite line from Kneeling Vespers that gave the image of God's loving mercy as a vast ocean.

His sincere and loving embrace afterwards was like the physical embrace of that loving mercy.

On August 18, 19 and 20, 2021 while serving at the funeral, Liturgy and burial of my confessor and friend of forty-two years my heart and mind envisioned the Journey of those years. Here lay a

man that was opposite of me in personality, personal characteristics and tastes. Here was a man who loved in a way that was authentic and life changing. Here was a man who was truly holy without the least trace of false piety or pretentiousness. Here lay a true priest fully vested, even with his jeweled hat, although he asked to be buried with just cassock, stole and cross "If the Metropolitan blesses it." Here he lay holding a cross that he would call his "Get out of jail free card."

Death did not have the final jail sentence but the Kingdom of God did. Whether in shorts, tee shirt and moccasins or fully vested, here is a true priest. I could almost see him sit up and say: "That's enough, now get a life".



A tribute to the ever-memorable Mitred Archpriest Michael Koblosh

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

How do you express one's feelings about someone who influenced your life in so many ways? My wife, Patty, and I met Fr. Michael and Nadia Koblosh in 1976 when they arrived at Ss Cyril and Methodius parish in Terryville, CT. There was an immediate connection between us, not only as the parish priest but as a mentor and special friend. Fr. Michael discussed with me that I consider the late-vocations program at St Vladimir's Seminary. I initially was reluctant but his encouragement and faith in me led me to the best decision in my life. He was always there to guide me and train me as a deacon. He and Nadia celebrated with us during the happy times and were especially comforting through some difficult times. His perspective on mat-

ters always provided me with a clearer understanding in dealing with issues and problems.

Fr. Michael's faith in Christ and His Holy Church was expressed by his love of family and others. He had a profound and positive impact on so many people during his life. We will miss his sermons, discussions, and guidance.

So, I best express my feelings as Fr. Michael would always do, with thanks to God. O Lord, thank you for providing me with Fr. Michael as my mentor, my spiritual confessor, and my dear friend.

"Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Enter into the joy of your Master!" (Matt. 25:23)

Memory Eternal! Вечная память!

ONE +

Bottom: St. Alexis parish supports work of Fr. James Parnell overseas: In September, St. Alexis Orthodox Church in Clinton, collected and packaged 12 boxes of goods (school supplies, sandals, meds and clothing) that were generously donated by the parishioners for an orphanage in Djibouti, Africa. Father James Parnell, Pastor of All Saints Orthodox Church in Hartford is currently stationed in Djibouti as a Chaplain with the US Army and when asked what he needed, requested that we send goods for a local orphanage that his unit supports.

Pictured is Marlene Melesko taking the 12 boxes out at the local post office for shipment to Djibouti.

—Vincent Melesko



Chapel from I

this offering in a coffee shop could take place, why not then at our Church? The benefits of such a project came pouring in immediately: a wonderful way to help those in need, a way to be a presence in the community, and a way to put our faith into practice.

The next question was how would our offering be unique, since there are already community programs in our town that offer such services. We have always sent in donations to them and will continue to do so, yet for a long time there was a

Above: The chapel is stocked with food and other necessities.



Below and on the following page: Scenes of the construction of the chapel.





yearning to reach out directly to those in need. The answer then came: we need to build a Food Chapel, where we not only feed bodies, but souls. In addition to food items, we would have icons on the walls, and a box for prayer requests, as well as information on the Orthodox Faith. Perhaps in seeking to overcome their hunger, they would realize what they truly hungered for was God.

When Father brought the idea to us at one of our monthly parish council meetings, there was great enthusiasm for the project, as well as hesitation for what it would entail. What if there was vandalism? Is there liability? Can we afford to keep it stocked? But through these hesitations there was the resounding desire to be of service, and to keep the commandments of God.

Father and Matushka already had their own vision for what we would do, but in a display of the many ways in which they seek to draw us together as the people of God, they wanted this to be undertaken by all of us as a parish. Everyone had a voice, and everyone was encouraged to partici-



pate. It is a credit to their leadership, and to the fortitude and faith of the people at Holy Trinity, that whatever nervousness or fear there was at the thought of such an undertaking was pushed aside in favor of doing our Christian duty.

The building of the chapel itself was a witness to the unity we have as a parish. Everyone's gifts were put to use. We had parishioners offer supplies, including wood and equipment for the construction, as well as icons, goods, write-ups to the local paper, and helping hands to partake in the raising of our small chapel. Inquirers at our parish even dedicated their Saturday to participate, and through God's grace the building of the chapel itself became a way for all of us to witness to them what faith in action looks like.

Since the chapel's construction we estimate that over \$3,000 dollars worth of food and

clothing has gone out to those in need in the last two months. This offering is not ours alone. Posting on a local facebook page about happenings in our town, the response to our undertaking was immense. Many members of the community outside the faith have used this as an opportunity to provide for others. Food and clothing items are dropped off almost daily. The outpouring of gratitude, and prayer requests, has been staggering. We now offer intercessions for more people in the community than we do for the members of our own parish. God is truly working in our lives and in the lives of those He has given us to minister to.

It is our great hope that in addition to feeding and clothing those in need, this offering will also let those around us know that we are here for them as brothers and sisters, and show them the face of Christ in the midst of the dire circumstances



the world finds itself in. When entering into our small chapel they are greeted by images of Christ and the Theotokos and St. Herman of Alaska. The energies of God which work through our iconography can shine upon them, and work inside their hearts, revealing to them the love and mercy which we all so desperately need. And most importantly, in feeding and clothing those who partake of this offering, we are feeding and cloth-

ing Christ Himself, who comes to us as the stranger, the hungry, the naked, and the imprisoned. In this we are blessed far beyond those we help. For we are given the opportunity to take our faith, and live it.

May our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, strengthen us to move into ever deeper ways of service, so that we may be lights to the world, and provide comfort to those in darkness. **ONE +**

St. Mark of Ephesus, Kingston Mass.

Laura Geigle

The parishioners of St. Mark's in Kingston are thankful that we are now able to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in person again! Our sincere thanks to Fr. John Bacon and Fr. Kevin Kalish who take turns serving us as well as our Parish Administrator, Fr. Vasily Lickwar. We also will be adding Great Vespers on the first Saturday of each month at 5pm.

The parish council has worked hard during this Covid time to keep us worshipping together. They have accomplished many improvements including a new septic system and the installment of two new icons written and donated by Bob Andrews.

The community recently said farewell to Steve & Alexandra Laferte who have relocated to Florida. Sandy & Steve were married at St. Marks in the early 1980s! This past year also marked the passing of loving members of our community; Matushka Elizabeth Bacon, Khouria Diana Bistany Masood, John Hood & Linda Hunchak Rohr. May their

memory be eternal. We were delighted to receive in our midst the newly Chrismated Daniel MacDonald and Katherine Dubrovsky. We look forward to the Diocesan Assembly in 2021 and the 20th All American Council in Baltimore in July of 2022!

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Right: Catherine Samiotes Condric,
St. Mark's Parish
Council President.



O.N.E.

Diocese of New England
Orthodox Church in America
Published bi-monthly

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon
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December 15 Deadline for next issue of the ONE