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### *Diocesan clergy hear from a “Journal of Joy”*

**Right: Fr. Nicholae Steinhardt**, who was permitted to become a monk late in life, in the last years of Communism in Romania.



**V. Rev. Joshua Mosher**

At the invitation of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, the clergy of the Diocese of New England gathered on March 31 to hear an online presentation by Rev. Dr. Bogdan Bucur. Fr. Bogdan shared from a book he has translated, tentatively titled “The Journal of Joy,” which will be published later this year by St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. The author is Fr. Nicholae Steinhardt, a Romanian monk whose life

under Communist oppression testified to courage and kindness together. Fr. Bogdan is Associate Professor of Patristics at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, N.Y.

Fr. Bogdan explained that Fr. Nicholae Steinhardt (1912–1989) wrote a journal describing his experience of converting to Christianity while in prison.

*Journal continued on 8*

## *Axios! Fr. Ambrose Powell ordained to the Holy Priesthood*



**Above: His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon addresses the newly ordained Fr. Ambrose Powell with his wife Matushka Margaret.**

### John Kruchok

With great joy, the clergy and faithful of Holy Transfiguration parish in New Haven welcomed His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, Locum Tenens of the Diocese of New England on Sunday, April 10, 2022, the fifth Sunday of Great Lent. Concelebrating with His Beatitude were V. Rev. Fr. John Kreta, diocesan chancellor, V. Rev. Fr. Steven Voytovich, Rector, Fr. Alessandro Margheritino, Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America, Fr. John Mikitish and Fr. Moses Locke; Fr. Deacons Mark Roosien and Ambrose Powell, who was ordained to the Holy Priesthood during the Hierar-



**Below: Metropolitan Tikhon prays over the candidate for ordination at the altar.**



**Above: Fr. Ambrose** is led into the altar by **Fr. Steven Voytovich** at the beginning of the rite of ordination to the Holy Priesthood.

chical Divine Liturgy.

With the ordination of Fr. Deacon Ambrose Powell to the Holy Priesthood, we also welcomed Mat. Pelagia, Fr. Deacon Gregory Uhrin and Mat. Lisa along with faithful from Holy Resurrection parish in Claremont, New Hampshire and oth-

ers from the northern deanery and the diocese.

His Beatitude was first welcomed by the children of the parish who presented flowers and incense which was actually made by the church school class during this lenten season.

Fr. Steven and Parish Council

President Robin Milberg offered the traditional greeting at the front doors of the church. The choir, under the direction of Mat. Cindy Voytovich was especially beautiful and included participation from our church school children.



**Below: His Beatitude awards Fr. John Mikitish the nabadrenik** for his service to the Orthodox Church in America.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude awarded Fr. John Mikitish the skufia and nabledrenik for his service to the diocese and the OCA Central Administration. (Fr. John was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in New Haven and is presently attached there.).

**Above: Metropolitan Tikhon addresses Fr. John Mikitish.**

At the conclusion of the service, Subdeacon Paul Tvardzik and John Kruchok were presented diocesan gramotas for their faithful service to the parish for many years. We offer prayerful congratulations to Frs. Ambrose Powell and John Mikitish and their families. Axios!



On the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, Holy Transfiguration also hosted the Connecticut deanery mission Vespers service.

Our parish looks forward to hosting the 60th New England Diocese Assembly, October 27-28, 2022 here in New Haven! **ONE +**

**Below: Fr. John Mikitish with Matusha Brenda (left) and Fr. Ambrose Powell with Matushka Margaret (right) stand with Metropolitan Tikhon and the assembled clergy and servers.**



# Orthodox Burial Ministry

Deborah Krajcik

Orthodox burial ministry in our area began with the gathering of a few friends. After my mother, Irina Krajcik's tragic death in a car acci-

dent in 2005, I joined Irene Kacandes, other Holy Resurrection parishioners from Claremont, N.H., and some non-Orthodox friends at Irene's home to converse about death in the recreation of a "death café," an idea

**Right: Fr. Mircea Geana** prays over the body of the departed **Bethany Thornton**.



she learned about in Switzerland that makes talking about death as normal as chatting in a café with friends.

Irene was inspired to take these conversations to our whole parish after attending a seminar at St. Jacob's of Alaska in Northfield Falls, Vt., where Lee Webster taught about "green burial" and the consonance of these ideas with ancient Christian burial practices and beliefs.

Parish conversations about topics like grief eventually led to the development of the burial preparation ministry at Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church. With Irene's leadership, the small group slowly developed over time with educational talks with medical experts in palliative care and hands-on practice following the steps in J. Mark Barna and Elizabeth J. Barna's book, *A Christian Ending: A Handbook for Burial in the Ancient Christian Tradition (2nd Ed)*.

The first fruit of these efforts was led by Father Mark and Matushka Reba Korban of St. Jacob's Church, Vt. When an elderly parishioner, Flora, passed away, they drove to the nursing home and consulted Irene on the telephone in preparing the body. The non-Orthodox family was very moved by these efforts and helped in the anointing of Flora. Memory Eternal!

A tragic death in 2020 put the Holy Resurrection group's efforts into practice for our dear parishioner, Natasha Brodeur. Memory Eternal! This first experience for me was unexpected and touched my heart in a

profound way. Through the beautiful reading of the psalms and church prayers and the loving care of her body, the grieving family and friends were shown a tangible way to enact love and hope.

Through Irene's efforts, the group continued to grow and develop during the period of the pandemic. Most recently, a virtual meeting was held this past February, which included old and new members from Holy Resurrection and St. Jacob of Alaska. I began attending Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Springfield, Vt., when my son-in-law, Fr. Mircea Geana became rector there three years ago. Last summer I started initiating talks regarding the burial ministry and many were interested.

Before I had the opportunity to share the burial ministry at Holy Trinity, another tragic death occurred with a young member of the church, Bethany Thornton. Memory Eternal! Knowing what a powerful and transformative experience burial ministry is, I asked my daughter, Matushka Sarah Geana to work with me and offer our services to Bethany's parents, Michelle and Doug Thornton. Matushka Sarah, Michelle and I formed an impromptu team.

Working with Michelle, Doug, and Mora, Bethany's older sister, to lovingly wash, anoint and dress their beloved daughter and sister was inexpressibly beautiful. Prayers and psalms were read by other family members throughout the burial preparation. Their non-Orthodox relatives shared how they had some

**"... grieving family and friends were shown a tangible way to enact love and hope."**

reservations about the burial preparation and expressed afterwards how grateful they were to be able to participate in the experience. Several other parishioners from Holy Trinity in the week following Bethany's death have expressed their desire to join the ministry.

In writing this article, my daughter Matushka Sarah and I struggled to find words for the experience of burial ministry. We both agree that the work is good and powerful and transformative. But why is it so? It is truly loving care for the body after death. Close family members and friends are able to be present with their dead loved ones which ideally links death to hope: they are seeing and feeling the body whose soul is with God.

Burial ministry supports Christian mourning without despair. Just being present with the dead serves to dispel our culture's view of death as morbid and scary. Whereas current customs include a funeral home which whisks the body away only to be seen at the church for the funeral; burial ministry removes that disconnect by providing continued presence, support, care, and prayer.

Burial ministry serves to alleviate much of the family's need to handle legal/process matters i.e. death certificate, burial/transit permit, casket,

cemetery services, flowers, funeral repast. By offering to do the legwork, we allow the grieving family and friends to focus on their good work of mourning and prayer, remembrance and rest which is so necessary following a death.

And finally, Orthodox burial ministry enables us to be good stewards of the earth. Embalming is a toxic and largely unnecessary custom which poisons not only the earth but also the funeral directors who prepare the bodies. Using pine caskets means

that they are able to decompose and lowers cost. By not using a vault or flipping the vault upside down, this allows the casket and the body contact with the earth bringing more vividly to reality the truth that, "...we are dust, and unto dust we shall return."

So, now we have twenty-six members of our Burial Ministry involving three churches. Our dear Lord has transformed the tragedy of death into a ministry that cares and supports families and friends from death to burial to hope in life eternal.

**ONE** †

*Written by Deborah Krajcik with contributions from Irene Kacandes and Matushka Sarah Geana*

**"Close family members and friends are able to be present with their dead loved ones which ideally links death to hope: they are seeing and feeling the body whose soul is with God."**

**"...we are dust, and unto dust we shall return."**

**Right: The arrest record of Fr. Nicholae (then Nicu Steinhardt).**



Born a Jew in Romania, Fr. Nicholae was implausibly accused of participating in an anti-communist conspiracy. In fact, he and his friends were intellectuals who thought and spoke too freely about what was happening to Romania under the Communists.

The friends were seized by the secret police, but he was given a chance to go free if he signed a confession and condemned others for conspiring against the state. He asked if he could go home to think about the offer, and the police permitted a brief visit. He was surprised that his elderly father was angry to see him. Fr. Bogdan recounted the words of Fr. Nicholae's father: "What are you doing here? Your friends will think you have betrayed them! You need to go back to prison." The father encouraged his son, "You will have hard days, but you will sleep well at night."

Fr. Bogdan identified courage as one major theme in Fr. Nicholae's

writings. This sharp encounter with his father helped his son to recognize the spiritual danger of cowardice. Fr. Bogdan observed that Fr. Nicholae wrote in prison that in the Book of Revelation, the cowardly are the first to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

Fr. Nicholae vividly described his prison, a dark and cold tunnel. It was an image of hell. But in this nightmare, he discovered what he called "the happiest days of my life." While in prison, he converted to Christianity. Fr. Nicholae said this experience prefigured both monastic hesychasm (prayerful inner silence) and heavenly bliss.

Fr. Nicholae was baptized in the noisome waters of his prison and vowed to complete his baptism with Holy Chrismation as soon as he was able. Released in 1964, he was chrismated at Schitu Darvari Church in Bucharest.



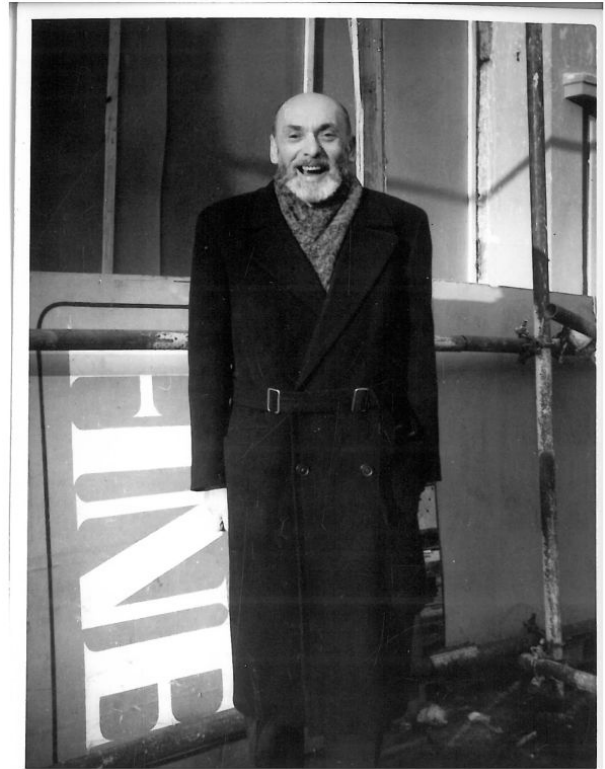
Reflecting on his baptism, Fr. Nicholae wrote, “Infants cannot know what baptism means. I am assaulted by ever stronger attacks of joy. The Holy Mysteries do exist, surrounding me with joy and silence.”

In his presentation, Fr. Bogdan turned to another major theme of Fr. Nicholae’s writings, the necessity of kindness. Our faith is known for both kindness and discernment, Fr. Nicholae observed: “Insults, sudden arguments, and gratuitous insults are as dissonant to heaven as the sins of all brothels.”

We need to unite kindness and discernment, Fr. Bogdan pointed out. He quoted Fr. Nicholae: “Nowhere did Christ ask us to be stupid. That is the sin of weakness and laziness.” He refers not to intelligence in this passage but awareness and speaking the relevant truth, Fr. Bogdan said.

“When our neighbor is oppressed, being sawn in two for speaking the truth, then we must shout the relevant truth,” Fr. Nicholae wrote. Fr. Bogdan elaborated on this idea of “the relevant truth,” citing as an example that Fr. Nicholae found fault with the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae, who focused on the errors of Catholics while they were being oppressed and killed by Communist authorities. Staniloae was not speaking the relevant truth in that moment, Fr. Bogdan explained.

If we are to discern what is relevant, then we must cultivate awareness. There is no excuse in blindness



to evils, Fr. Bogdan said. He quoted Fr. Nicholae: “The Good Samaritan was not merely good but attentive.” Likewise with the Last Judgment: how else can we know the Lord’s hunger and thirst unless we pay attention?

Fr. Bogdan asked the clergy to bear with him as he presented a potentially controversial aspect of Fr. Nicholae’s thought on kindness and discernment. Fr. Nicholae criticized the laws the Communists introduced against prostitution, divorce and abortion. He said they followed the letter of God’s law while undermining the spirit of justice and mercy. Freedom is a necessary condition for all virtue. Totalitarianism is not concerned with public morality but absolute domination. Fr. Bogdan acknowledged these thoughts “can scandalize at first sight, but they are filled with deep insight and grounded in faith.”

**Right:** This and all other images of **Fr. Nicholae** were shared by Fr. Bogdan, who expects SVS Press will publish the translation of the “Journal of Joy” by the end of 2022.

Fr. Bogdan concluded that Fr. Nicholae Steinhardt's journal unfolds crucial principles that help us relearn our own Christianity.

In the discussion that followed, Fr. Bogdan was asked what brought about Fr. Nicholae's conversion. He replied it was a slow process. Fr. Nicholae understood in retrospect that God spoke to

him beforehand. In prison, he saw Christianity practiced under stress.

"Terrible circumstances that could turn some into beasts instead led these witnesses to become saints," Fr. Bogdan said. "But it only took a few months in prison before he demanded baptism."

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## ONE Stewards 2022

# "Giving Above and Beyond"

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

CHRIST IS RISEN!  
INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Greetings during this joyous Paschal season.

Your "giving above and beyond" to ONE Stewards enables the Diocese to in turn "give above and beyond" to the following essential Diocesan programs:

- ◆ Youth Rally and other Youth Programs
- ◆ Seminaries and Scholarships for Seminarians
- ◆ Support for Diocesan Missions
- ◆ Charitable Giving to support programs like IOCC, OCMC, OCA Stewards

To date, the ONE Stewards donations are behind previous years. We are not even halfway to our budgeted amount. Enclosed with this ONE Newsletter is a ONE Stewards return envelope. Please consider sending a donation. If you have already donated, please consider a second donation.

**Thank you!**



In 2008, our ever-memorable Archbishop Nikon began the "Bishop's Circle Challenge", asking us to join him in donating \$500 or more to ONE Stewards. If possible, please help grow the number of Bishop Circle Donors.

**Thank you!**

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Thank you for your continued support.

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## Christ the Savior Church Participates in Connecticut March for Life, and National Orthodox Baby Shower

Sofia Cole

On March 23, 15 members of Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Southbury, Conn., attended the Connecticut State March for Life. It was the first March for Life in Connecticut.

In celebration of the feast of the Annunciation on March 25, Christ the Savior Church participated in the 2nd Annual National Orthodox Baby Shower, coordinated by Orthodox Christians for Life. Christ the Savior's participation was organized by their affiliated ministry, Orthodox Christians for Life - Christ the Savior.

Over a two-week time period, we collected over 600 diapers, 3,000 wipes, 145 pairs of socks, a crib and changing table, 18 outfits, ranging in size from preemie to 2T, and many more donations for Carolyn's Place Pregnancy Care Center. The parish collected enough funds for a Pack N' Play and an \$85 monetary donation. Many of the donations have already been distributed to clients.

On November 4, 1991, at St John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Waretown, Conn., Fr. Robert Russeau heard a cry from inside the church. A newborn baby girl was wrapped in a blue t-shirt in a box on the floor. Long

story short, the ladies of the church named the baby Carolyn Marie, she was confidentially adopted, and the parish started Carolyn's Place Pregnancy Care Center shortly after.

Today, Carolyn's Place assists women and families in need on a daily basis. Carolyn's Place is the partner pregnancy care center of OCLife-Christ the Savior.

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**Right: Parish Ministry Leaders Arden Stamper and Sofia Cole of OCLife-Christ the Savior collect donations for Carolyn's Place Pregnancy Care Center**



**O.N.E.**

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

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**Rate:** \$50.00 per quarter page, \$100.00 per half page, \$175.00 per full page.

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## Upcoming

**June 25**

**Deadline for next issue of the ONE**

**July 11-15**

**Vacation Church School at Three Saints Park, Bethany, CT**

Contact Fr. Patrick Burns: (203) 734-3988 or [pneumaticmotives@gmail.com](mailto:pneumaticmotives@gmail.com)