

Atlanta Deanery Report

October 11, 2011

Fr. Alexander Fecanin

General - Toured 3 Georgia and 3 Alabama parishes with His Grace, Bishop Mark (Maymon) the week of June 6 – 10, 2011. We were received graciously in all the parishes and again my gratitude to the Fathers for their cooperation and hospitality.

Visited the Montgomery Mission Station, concelebrating with Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky on September 24 / 25, 2011. The group made a commitment to tithing and to supporting Fr. Dimitri for 2 weekends per month. The people were encouraged by Diocesan Treasurer Milos Konjevich who was also in attendance and spoke to the group.

Atlanta

St. Mary of Egypt ... by Fr. Peter Smith

We at St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church have been active in stabilizing our plans for future growth. We have invested a tidy sum to the Diocesan Program of funding growth factors around the Diocese. We have directly involved our two attached clergymen to three missions in the area; we have involved the entire Parish in a local "SCRIP" Program for raising funds by buying through purchase cards from local stores and also encouraged our faithful to take a more active part in the weekly operation of the Parish.

There have been 13 Baptisms of both children and adults; two marriages celebrated and 1 funeral in the past year. We presently are with four catechumens and overall serve approximately 125 souls - in addition to many guests who visit often. We will send four delegates [two clergy and two lay] to the All American Council. All four of the clergy serving this Parish and other Missions are active participants in our local Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood - with a total membership of 20 clergy from 17 Parishes in the Metro Atlanta area.

There are ongoing plans which have been presented to our county for a deceleration lane off the main road as well as an entryway to augment the flow of cars in and out of our lovely, quiet property. These are all preliminary to the plans and prayers for our future Worship Temple.

Father Peter and Mother Terri have been asked to facilitate and host a 12 day pilgrimage to the Holy Land -- Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to Tiberius to Elat to St. Catherine Monastery to the Negeb Desert back to Jerusalem and home. Brochures will be available for interested pilgrims. St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church offers both Church School classes for youngsters in addition to adult classes to support and enhance the spiritual lives of *our faithful*. *Please pray for us - as we pray for our wonderful Diocese. God bless.*

St. John the Wonderworkerby Fr. Jacob Myers

The biggest thing in our parish this year is that on St. Nicholas Feast Day, we will pay off and own our church. We have had some very dedicated people in the parish who have graciously donated money to this end. It has come down to \$24,600 that we owe to pay off the mortgage, and someone anonymously offered to match whatever is donated up to half of the money. Our parish is very excited, especially to pay off the debt by St. Nicholas Feast Day.

Our Loaves and Fishes program continues to thrive, feeding upwards of 80 people a day Monday through Friday, and people from Atlanta continue to donate money on a regular basis to our program for its support and upkeep. We have regular volunteers who come and cook a meal and we take community service workers as well who must work a certain number of court ordered hours. We were out of canned goods this spring and we put word out to the Orthodox Churches of the city and raised a large amount of canned goods for food bags as well as the Greek Cathedral sending us \$400 in gift cards for buying canned goods when we need them.

We have done some serious cleaning at the church this year, cleaning all the ducts of the church, the carpets, and the office of the church. We put a de-humidifier in our air conditioning system so that the air would be dry and pure. We had some coughing in the members, but most of it has cleared up with the cleaning.

Our church continues to grow, bring in new people almost every week. Our web site is worked on daily and is one of our main forms of outreach what with video taping the sermons and putting them up on the site, as well as putting new pictures of our activities up every week at least. Many have come to the church through the web site, but they stay because we have so worked on a warm lovely greeting, making all feel at home and exposed to our great Faith.

Our school is smaller this year and is seriously looking at how we will conduct the school in the future. We look for some major changes in the next couple of years.

We continue to have church services on a daily basis, communion 4 times a week, and every day of any major fast. The number of people that attend these daily services is growing.

Macon

St. Innocent of Alaska ...by Fr. Theophan Buck

As was mentioned in the last report, this last year was a year of transition at St. Innocent Orthodox Church. Currently St. Innocent has around 30-40 regular attendees. Over the past year a few of our college students have moved away and at the same time we have added three new converts.

At this point our parish is regional with some people driving which means most of our attendance is on Sundays. Attendance is steady and compared to last year has picked up on feast days. Church school is going well and is divided into three groups. We are upgrading and expanding our current parish hall too. The prison ministry is now weekly. This past summer Fr. Theophan and Thomas Keyhayes offered a class on Early Church History at Central State Prison and at one time had 29 inmates attending this class. This past year Fr. Theophan has begun to talk a lot about evangelism. In October we are having a major outreach event at our parish called "A Taste of St. Innocent Orthodox Church." At this event we are offering free barbeque, educational church tours and His Grace, Bishop Mark Maymon will be giving a talk on the origins and development of the New Testament. The plan is to have a similar event yearly so that we can give back to our community and also educate people on who we are as Orthodox Christians and what we are about.

Rincon

St. Mary Magdalene ...by Fr. James Bohlman

The current membership is: 43 adults, 2 Catechumens, and 7 children, for a total membership of 52.

The parish owns 2 acres of land, upon which sits the doublewide that serves as the Parish Hall and Residence of the Priest. On the land also are 3 storage sheds, a large picnic pavilion, and the church consecrated in 2007 (roughly 34 feet by 80 feet).

Functioning in the parish are 1 Rector, 1 Deacon, 2 Readers, and 2 Choir Directors.

Two women in the parish function as the Vestment Guild, making and repairing liturgical vestments and church hangings.

The Prospora and Litiya guild is composed of 4 individuals who keep the parish supplied for the services and special events.

Landscaping and development of the parish grounds is under the guidance of one of the men of the parish who has taken on this charge of service to the parish.

The parish tithes faithfully to the Diocese each month.

October 22nd, 2011 will see the parish's Fourth Annual Russian Festival, an event that draws visitors from 3 states.

The parish membership has been divided into four Food Teams and each Sunday a Food Team supplies the parish and our visitors with a full meal for Fellowship.

Approximately 5 years ago a Sisterhood was blessed to form, and acts in a philanthropic role on behalf of the parish. Last year a Brotherhood was blessed to form and has taken over making various repairs to the parish buildings, supplying the parish and our visitors with a meal on months containing a 5th Sunday, and is contemplating various ways of representing the parish in the area.

Each Sunday of Orthodoxy the parish celebrates with the Greek parish of Savannah, the two parishes alternating the site of the celebration between the two parishes.

For the past 4 years the parish has participated in a potluck supper with the local Roman Catholic Church, Methodist churches, and Lutheran churches for the Roman "Week of Christian Unity".

The parish has a "Traveling Icon" which is committed into the care of one of our families for a period of two weeks, at the end of which period the Icon is brought back to the church and then committed into the care of another of our families. During the course of a year and a half the Icon travels to all of our parish households. The Icon serves as a source of consolation, an encouragement to prayer, and an inspiration for each household's love of God.

Helena, GA

Sts. Constantine and Helen Mission ...by Fr. James Bohlman

The current membership is: 8 adults, 1 Catechumen and 1 child, for a total membership of 10. There is 1 Reader functioning in the mission.

The mission owns 2 acres of land, upon which sits the doublewide that serves as the chapel, the Fellowship hall, and classrooms.

The mission is currently searching for a used doublewide which the mission will then refurbish and which will be able to function as a residence for a long-hoped-for Priest of their own. The mission is seeking and requesting a Priest of its own so that the mission might be able to participate in the full cycle of liturgical services and have access to all of the sacraments.

Once a month Rev. Hieromonk James (Bohlman) and Reader Deacon Vassily, of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Rincon, GA, come to the mission for Confessions, the Divine Liturgy, instructions in the Faith and the Parish Council meeting. The mission also meets on Sundays and Wednesdays for Reader's services and Choir practice.

The Mission members tithe faithfully to the mission, enabling it to pay all of its bills as well as to accrue a slight financial reserve. The mission also faithfully tithes to the Diocese each month.

Alabama

Anniston - St. Luke the Evangelist ...by Fr. Basil Henry

God has graciously blessed His little vineyard here in Anniston, Alabama this year. At the Pastoral Conference in February, Metropolitan JONAH elevated us from mission station to a full mission. We then celebrated Great Lent and Pascha in our magnificent new temple location on the historic Noble Park in downtown Anniston. This Pascha, we were overjoyed to have in excess of 50 people (exceeding last years 40) join us in celebrating the Lord's Resurrection. The Lord continues to produce new fruit upon this rich and fertile soil. We have grown from our original three members to well over 30 communicants and currently are preparing 7 catechumens for Baptism and Chrismation during the upcoming Nativity celebrations.

With a plethora of children adding their joyful energy to services and coffee hour, we have initiated a new Sunday school program, following Divine Liturgy, beginning this November. Education is as important for adults as it is for children, so I started a weekly class on Holy Scripture each Wednesday evening. We have just completed an in-depth study of I Corinthians and are preparing to dive into another of the Apostle Paul's Epistles. Our goal is to produce a video recording of the classes and make them available, along with digital handouts, for those unable to attend. To provide a regular rhythm of liturgical and community life, we keep a simple daily cycle of services, with a consistent regular attendance of between 7 and 10. As part of our apostolic outreach, we have launched a program on the campus of nearby Jacksonville State University. Campus morning prayers are offered each Monday in a classroom led by one of our first converts, a professor of mathematics with the priest joining on occasion. We are currently making arrangements to celebrate Matins in the university chapel.

Our sister church in nearby Birmingham, St. Symeon the New Theologian, blessed us with the gift of a very nice infant baptismal font and we look forward to using it to baptize our newest member at the beginning of November. In the interest of expanding our works of mercy, we established a food drive with donations going to help the local soup kitchen. Several of the ladies in the church have formed a ministry of crocheting and knitting baby hats and booties for teen mothers and unplanned pregnancies. These items are then blessed at a special service with prayers for the infants and their mothers, and are then donated to both a local pro-life program and our hospital's maternity ward. These new ministries join our already existing Abba Moses Free Clinic, which offers free medical care to the poor, through the ministry of one of our founding members, Dr. Carla Thomas, MD. This past August, the local paper, The Anniston Star, did a very gracious piece on our mission, including front page references and an extensive two page article with large color photos, one of them half a page in size, with the wonderful 1.25 inch headline "Old-School Christianity: St. Luke Orthodox preserves the ways of the ancient church". God has been very gracious to us indeed! I must say, in my opinion, there is no better life than that of a country priest. Glory to God for all things.

Tuscaloosa – St. Gregory the Theologian...by Fr. Demetrius Edwards

Saint Gregory's in Moundville, Alabama, continues working on our new chapel. The main structure has been completed but we are still working on the iconostasis and its extension.

Work is being performed on the new kitchen, to make it commercial grade so as to allow us to serve foods to the public.

The Sisterhood of St. Xenia has a wonderful bookstore with many items from Russia, Romania, and Greece, hand made icons and much more. The Sisterhood also has many fundraisers throughout the year including yard sales, scrip sales, and recycling aluminum cans.

Over the past year, many of our college students have moved away, but we still encourage the Orthodox students to attend services while they are away from home.

At this point our parish is regional with some people driving as far as 60 to 100 miles which mean most of our attendance is on Sunday.

This year St. Gregory's has received 7 new Catechumens who are beginning their journey to Orthodoxy. Please pray for Saint Gregory's!

Birmingham – St. Symeon the New Theologian ...by Fr. Alexander Fecanin

Clergy – Fecanin, Fr. Ignatius Crockett (attached), Fr. Ernesto Obregon (on loan status from the Antiochians), Fr. Deacon Ephraim Rivers

St. Symeon's has had a positive year of growth with the Baptism and / or Chrismation of 12 adults and 10 children. There were 4 Marriages and one very sad funeral due to a motorcycle accident. Currently, there are 2 Catechumens and a few additional inquirers.

The parish choir released a CD recording with hopes of doing more in the future.

A team of members were involved in tornado relief work in the community this past summer. Two members had close encounters with the tornados, but thankfully survived with minor injuries but some property damage.

The Church School has around 60 children enrolled. There was a summer children's retreat and play.

His Grace, Bishop Mark visited on the Leavetaking of Ascension for Vespers, Dinner and fellowship with the Parish.

Building plans and options are being considered.