

## Rector's Letter for October, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters:

On October 8–9, 2011, we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the parish of SS. Peter & Paul. In an additional blessing, October 9 also marks the glorification as a saint of Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Apostle to America, in 1989. These two celebrations together have much to teach us.

St. Tikhon's life, which you can read later in this newsletter, is a vivid example of love for the Lord, care for those in need, and the desire to spread the knowledge of Jesus Christ to new people. St. Tikhon and many others, famous or unknown, helped to bring new life to the Church in North America.

For Orthodox Christians in America as well as Russia, St. Tikhon inspired courage and devotion in face of confusion and persecution. Our own parish lives on thanks to this kind of courage. And if SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church is to thrive for another hundred years, it will be through the prayers and inspiration of St. Tikhon and those like him who commended themselves, and each other, and all their life to Christ our God. May God grant our church many, many years!

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. John S. Modlin*

## Around the Parish

The **Parish Anniversary Cookbook** is now available for sale—please speak with Valerie Wigglesworth or Sarah Massaro. The books are a lovely hardcover, \$20 each.

This year's **Orthodox Education Day** at Saint Vladimir's Seminary will be themed "For God & Country" and will honor military chaplains and those serving in the armed forces. "Ed Day" takes place on the first Saturday of October: Oct. 1. It starts with a Divine Liturgy at 8 AM and includes workshops, exhibits, dance groups, and delicious food. There will a number of special events tied with this year's theme as well.

Since everyone is encouraged to participate in the services and events of Ed Day at SVS, there will be **no Vespers in Meriden** on Sat., Oct. 1.

The **18th Annual Benefit Dinner of the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches of Connecticut (FORCC)** will be held on Sunday, Oct. 2, at 1 PM, at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Bridgeport. Anton Vrame, Director of the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese will speak on "Educating Orthodox Christians for Today." Scholarships will be awarded to high school graduates who exemplify faith and service.

The annual **Diocesan Assembly** will be taking place in Ansonia on Oct. 21–22.

The **All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America** will be held in the vicinity of Seattle, Washington, Oct. 31–Nov. 4. Every few years, delegates of the various parishes, monasteries, and seminaries of the OCA meet with the Holy Synod of Bishops to deliberate on the overall direction and mission of our Church. Fr. Joshua and Tim Tassmer plan to attend. Please pray for us all.

On Sunday, Nov. 6, we will observe the annual **Endowment Fund thanksgiving and memorial service** after the Divine Liturgy. We will give thanks for all the blessings the Lord has showered on us, and commemorate the living and departed remembered through the Fund.

Our **Parish Centennial** will be celebrated on October 8–9. We will gather for Vespers and the Blessing of the Church on Saturday at 4 PM, and enjoy a reception afterward. On Sunday, Metropolitan Jonah will preside with Bishop Nikon and Bishop Melchisedek at the Liturgy, beginning 9 AM. We will proceed from church to our Anniversary Banquet at the Seasons Restaurant in Wallingford, opening at 1 PM. At the banquet we will make a special point of honoring those who have built up SS. Peter & Paul over the past hundred years: our former pastors; benefactors who took thought for the good of our parish in their wills; and the Brotherhood, who have been instrumental in the founding and ongoing life of our parish. May God continue to bless our church for many years!

## **October 9: Glorification of St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, Enlightener of North America**

St. Tikhon was born as Vasily Ivanovich Belavin on January 19, 1865 into the family of Ioann Belavin, a rural priest of the Toropetz district of the Pskov diocese. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility. He led an austere and chaste life, and in 1891, when he turned 26, he took monastic vows. Nearly the whole town gathered for the ceremony. The meek and humble young man was given the name Tikhon in honor of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk.

In just a few years, Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin on October 19, 1897, and then served for a year as Vicar Bishop of the Kholm Diocese. Bishop Tikhon zealously devoted his energy to the establishment of the new vicariate. On September 14, 1898, Bishop Tikhon was made Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska.

As head of the Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Tikhon was a zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard. He did much to promote the spread of Orthodoxy, and to improve his vast diocese. He changed its name from "Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska" to "Diocese of the Aleutians and North America" in 1900.

In 1905, the American Mission was made an Archdiocese, and St. Tikhon was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He had two vicar bishops: Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska, and St. Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn to assist him in administering his large, ethnically diverse diocese. In June of 1905, St. Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of St. Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania.

In 1907, he returned to Russia, and served in Yaroslavl and then Lithuania before the February Revolution of 1917. During this time, he spared no effort to help the poor, personally and through organizing charitable institutions.

After the February Revolution and formation of a new Synod, St. Tikhon became one of its members. On June 21, 1917, the Moscow Diocesan Congress of clergy and laity elected him as their ruling bishop. He was a zealous and educated archpastor, widely known even outside his country.

On August 15, 1917, a council of the Church of Russia was opened in Moscow, and Archbishop Tikhon was raised to the dignity of Metropolitan, and then elected as chairman of the council. The council had as its aim to restore the life of the Russian Orthodox Church on strictly canonical principles, and its primary concern was the restoration of the Patriarchate, which had been abolished by Tsar Peter the Great. All council members would select three candidates, and then a lot would reveal the will of God. The council members chose three

candidates: Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, the wisest, Archbishop Arseny of Novgorod, the strictest, and Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow, the kindest of the Russian hierarchs.

On November 5, following the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a monk removed one of the three ballots from the ballot box, which stood before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God: Metropolitan Tikhon was the newly elected Patriarch. In accepting the will of the council, Patriarch Tikhon foresaw that his ministry would be filled with affliction and tears, but through all his suffering, he remained the same accessible, unassuming, and kindly person.

His gentle disposition did not prevent him from showing firmness in Church matters, however, particularly when he had to defend the Church from her enemies. He bore a very heavy cross. He had to administer and direct the Church amidst wholesale church disorganization, in conditions of internal schisms and upheavals.

The situation was complicated by external circumstances: by the accession to power of the godless regime, by hunger, and civil war. Church property was being confiscated, clergy were subjected to court trials and persecutions, and Christ's Church endured repression. News of this came to the Patriarch from all ends of Russia. His exceptionally high moral and religious authority helped him to unite the scattered and enfeebled flock. In his messages, he called on people to fulfill the commandments of Christ,

and to attain spiritual rebirth through repentance.

The summer of 1921 brought a severe famine to the Volga region. In August, Patriarch Tikhon issued a message to the Russian people and to the people of the world, calling them to help famine victims. He gave his blessing for voluntary donations of church valuables which were not directly used in liturgical services. However, on February 23, 1922, the Bolsheviks published a decree making all valuables subject to confiscation.

According to the 73rd Apostolic Canon, such actions were regarded as sacrilege, and the Patriarch could not approve such total confiscation, especially since many doubted that the valuables would be used to combat famine. This forcible confiscation aroused popular indignation everywhere. Nearly two thousand trials were staged all over Russia, and more than ten thousand believers were shot. The Patriarch was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923.

Being a good pastor, who devoted himself entirely to the church's cause, he called upon the clergy to do the same: "Devote all your energy to preaching the word of God and the truth of Christ, especially today, when unbelief and atheism are audaciously attacking the Church of Christ. May the God of peace and love be with all of you!"

In 1924, Patriarch Tikhon began to feel unwell. He checked into a hospital, but would leave it on Sundays and Feast Days in order to

conduct services. On Sunday, April 5, 1925, he served his last Liturgy, and died two days later. On March 25/April 7, 1925, in the evening, the Patriarch slept a little, then he woke up and asked what time it was. When told it was 11:45 PM, he made the Sign of the Cross twice and said, "Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you." He did not have time to cross himself a third time.

Almost a million people came to say farewell to the Patriarch. The large cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow could not contain the crowd, which overflowed the monastery property into the square and adjacent streets. St. Tikhon, the eleventh Patriarch of Moscow, was primate of the Russian Church for seven and a half years.

On September 26/October 9, 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon and numbered him among the saints. For nearly seventy years, St. Tikhon's relics were believed lost, but in February 1992, they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery. It would be difficult to imagine the Russian Orthodox Church without Patriarch Tikhon during those years. He did so much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during those difficult years of trial. Perhaps the saint's own words can best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake."