

HERMITAGE

June 2019

Holy Cross Monastery Newsletter



New Monastery Church

Fundraising and Construction Begins This Summer

IN OUR WINTER NEWSLETTER we shared initial details regarding our plans for construction of the new temple. As we mentioned at that time, we are dividing the project into three phases: Phase One consisting of infrastructural changes and site preparation, Phase Two consisting of construction of the temple building, and Phase Three consisting of adornment and beautification of both the interior and exterior of the church.

Our existing church was built for a brotherhood of eight at a time when visitors were few and far between. Now our brotherhood has grown to almost thirty, and there is rarely a day without numerous guests and pilgrims praying with us during the divine services. While this is certainly a tremendous blessing, there nevertheless continue to be many men who wish to come here to consecrate their lives to Christ and His

Holy Church as monastics—but we simply do not have the space to accept them. The construction of this new, much larger church will allow our brotherhood to continue to grow and thrive with the help and blessing of Almighty God.

With God's help we are now moving forward with Phase One of the project this summer, with the intention of completion by the end of the year. Our tasks this year include:

- Rebuilding the large rock retaining wall with proper structural support and—more importantly—proper drainage for the massive amount of water runoff which currently turns the intended church site into something of a lake after heavy storms
- Rerouting the utility lines which currently pass underneath the construction site
- Putting down gravel on the new land bridge, which will provide vehicle access to the monastery campus and guest house once excavation begins
- Constructing an additional parking lot behind the Outdoor Chapel in order to provide space for vehicles once excavation is underway on the site of the current parking lot
- Excavating the construction site
- Pouring the foundation
- Erecting the ground-level walls of the new church

While these tasks are underway we will be finalizing the plans for the church itself, which we hope to be able to share with everyone by Pilgrimage Weekend. **We currently plan for the new church to be a two-story structure, with a footprint of roughly 110' x 75'.** For comparison, our current church is approximately 36' x

24'. If all goes according to plan, we will begin Phase Two—construction of the new temple itself—first thing next spring.

The current working budget for the first two phases—site preparation and temple construction—is \$2.5 million. In order to reach this goal, with the blessing of Metropolitan Hilarion we are announcing a new matching funds campaign: **from today through Pilgrimage Weekend (October 5), the first \$465,000 donated towards the new church will be matched by two anonymous benefactors, doubling your donation and giving the monastery a total of \$930,000 towards Phases 1-2** (in addition to the funds we have been able to set aside ourselves). Please prayerfully consider supporting this effort financially, and please beseech our merciful Lord that He will bless our undertaking and help us to finally bring it completion.

If you wish to make a contribution, you may enclose a check in the included return envelope marked “**Church Construction**,” keeping it separate from any moleben submission you may also be sending (please be sure also to write “**Church Fund**” on the memo line of your check). Alternatively, you may donate on the dedicated Church Fund page on our website.

May the Lord—and His servant, our beloved patron St. Panteleimon—reward all of you for your continued prayers, love, and support!

Archimandrite Seraphim
Abbot of Holy Cross Monastery



Holy Cross is a Russian Orthodox Men's Monastery under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York. The abbot and confessor of the monastery is Archimandrite Seraphim.

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News from the Farm

BY GOD'S GRACE, the monastery farm has abundantly increased this year. We have expanded the apiary from 40 to nearly 80 hives, and with the generous help of our benefactors we have greatly improved our apiary equipment. This now allows us to manage our 80 hives in the amount of time that it used to take us to manage 15.

Our chicken flock continues to grow, laying many rich eggs for our consumption as well as supplying the monastery bakery. We recently acquired about 45 more chicks, which brings our flock to approximately 120.

As the brotherhood grows, we are adjusting our method of gardening in order to be able to provide a sufficient crop of vegetables for the larger number of monks and visitors. Instead of growing a large variety of crops as we have in the past, we are growing large quantities of only a few crops: tomatoes, zucchini, squash, eggplant, and corn.

Our dairy goats continue to provide an ample and healthy supply of milk. Soon some of them will be placed in rotational paddock throughout the forest in order to help clear the underbrush. This provides high quality forage for the goats and better air circulation in the forest, which will benefit both us and them.



Maurice Sill: Memory Eternal

ON THE GLORIOUS FEAST of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ (Thursday, June 6th) our beloved friend and benefactor Maurice Sill departed this life at the age of 94, only two days after his birthday. On the morning of the Feast, he attended the Divine Liturgy at his home parish of Christ the Saviour in Wayne, West Virginia. He confessed, received Holy Communion, and was in very good spirits. Later, while walking on a nature trail with his grandson, he reposed peacefully in the Lord. Those who know Moe cannot imagine that he would have wanted to pass from this life in any other way. He was with a loved one, in the nature he so loved, and had prepared his soul through Confession and Holy Communion on a great feast of our Saviour.

We pray that just as Christ ascended into heaven and eternally enthroned our human nature in the bosom of the Holy Trinity, He will also grant His servant Maurice to dwell eternally with Him. May the memory of Moe, who together with his wife Nadya donated the land upon which Holy Cross Monastery now stands, truly be eternal!



Moe and Nadya Sill in the early days of Holy Cross Monastery.



Moe Sill a short while before his repose.



Announcing the Annual Celebration of the Feast of St. Panteleimon at the Hermitage

August 8th – 9th, 2019

HOLY CROSS MONASTERY invites you to celebrate the feast of the Holy Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon with the brotherhood and fellow pilgrims of the monastery. Saint Panteleimon is the patron and protector of the Hermitage, and in recent years his Feast has become a secondary day of pilgrimage for our friends (after our main Pilgrimage Weekend—see below). His Grace Bishop Nicholas of Manhattan, NY will preside for the feast. A Festal Vigil will be served on Thursday evening, and on Friday morning there will be a water blessing and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, followed by a procession and Moleben to Saint Panteleimon.

At the Festal Moleben, and for seven days thereafter, we will commemorate names of the sick and suffering (both Orthodox and non-Orthodox) who are in need of St. Panteleimon's aid. We are including a commemoration slip and remittance envelope, with which you may submit names together with any alms, before the August feast.

Since we are including two envelopes with this newsletter, be sure to use the one marked with "Attn: St. Panteleimon Moleben" to send us your names.

Thursday, August 8th

6:30 p.m. Festal Vigil with Litia & Akathist

Friday, August 9th

8:00 a.m. Water Blessing, 9:00 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy with Moleben for the Sick & Suffering

Holy Cross Monastery Pilgrimage Weekend

September 28th – 29th, 2019



WE INVITE EVERYONE to join us for the 2019 Pilgrimage Weekend. His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, will preside at the Divine Services. Visiting clergy are invited to concelebrate at the hierarchal services.

After Sunday morning's Divine Liturgy, a festive banquet will be held in the spacious hall of the Holy Spirit Orthodox Church in Huntington. All are welcome to attend the banquet.

Many come to Pilgrimage Weekend every year from all over the country to join with the monks and with one another in liturgical worship and fellowship. Over the years friendships have formed amongst fellow pilgrims, thus making Pilgrimage Weekend a reunion for old friends, a spiritually enriching experience for newcomers, and most importantly an occasion to partake of the Holy Mysteries and to strengthen one's faith.

Please see the enclosed "Pilgrim's Guide" for information on how to reach the Monastery, details regarding possible accommodations, and other guidelines for visitors.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Saturday, September 28th

2:30 p.m. Great Procession from the Monastery Church to the Outdoor Chapel of the Mother of God of the Sign with the Holy Icons and Relics of the Monastery, with Moleben and Anointing

4:30 p.m. Buffet supper for pilgrims

6:00 p.m. Vigil with Litia

Sunday, September 29th

9:00 a.m. Hours & Hierarchal Liturgy at Outdoor Chapel of the Mother of God of the Sign

Banquet Following at the Hall of Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, Huntington, WV

A Pilgrimage to Holy Russia

This year three monks from Holy Cross once again made a pilgrimage to Optina Monastery, with the blessing of our Metropolitan, our Abbot, and the Abbot of Optina. During their stay at the Optina Skete our monks follow the daily monastic schedule, praying and working alongside the Skete monks. By God's grace and through the prayers of the Holy Elders of Optina, they bring back something of their experience to to enrich our life in America here at Holy Cross Monastery. Below are some of their reflections on this pilgrimage.

ON MAY 26th, the day our monastery commemorates the Port Arthur Icon of the Mother of God, we left for Russia with Her blessing. The copy in our chapel, painted for the Orthodox Christians of North America, features inscriptions in both English and Slavonic. In it, the Mother of God stands upon two broken swords, symbolizing peace between the two great nations of America and Russia; in this same spirit of peace we departed to drink from the spiritual wells of Holy Rus'. Our pilgrimage consisted of a week-long stay in Saint Petersburg, Russia's door to the West, and nearly two weeks at the historic monastery of Optina, the heart of the great Russian spiritual renaissance of 19th century.

In the nearly thirty years since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Church has been slowly but surely resurrecting after its Golgotha. Yet the seventy years of violent atheist persecution continues to leave its mark on contemporary Russia. The churches are open, prayer is no longer a crime, but the everyday life of Russians is awash in the same morass of consumerism and secularism that inundates us in America. The main difference between our spiritual plight and theirs, however, is that those seventy years of brutal persecution were unable to destroy Russia's living link to her ancient faith and spirituality. Christ always keeps His promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church.

But for us American Orthodox Christians, the foundations of our Church life were never laid as they were in pre-Revolutionary Russia. In the two hundred years of Orthodoxy in America, we certainly have had many examples of holiness and piety; nonetheless, we have no historical memory of a society wholly formed by the Church, wherein

even mundane realities are infused with the scent of holiness. That is the one of the greatest values for us Americans to make pilgrimage to Russia, where generations of holy men and women—most of them known only to God—have prayed and struggled, and where they continue to be present even if we sometimes lack the spiritual sense to perceive them.

In Petersburg, the highlights of our trip were visits to the relics of St. Xenia, St. John of Kronstadt, and the Royal Martyrs Tsar Nicholas and his family. Our time here was full of adventure, with the action of God's providence manifest in the unfolding of each day. We felt the warm and gracious welcome of these saints as we visited their shrines and the places where they lived, walked, and prayed—and not only theirs, but also that of all the Orthodox Christians we encountered in Russia, who were truly overjoyed to learn that there are Orthodox monastics even in America.

After our time in the bustling metropolis of Petersburg, we were grateful for the chance to escape to the monastic quiet of Optina: to venerate the relics of the Elders there, to pray in the chapel of the three Paschal new-martyrs; and to share in the life and struggles of the monastic brotherhood. It is our sincere hope that these visits will remain a regular part of the life of our brotherhood, to be inspired by the example of the fathers—both living and departed—and to partake of the spiritual riches which are present there in such abundance.

We return with a spirit quenched by the deep well that is Holy Rus'. This is not some idealistic fantasy, but rather an invisible reality—still hidden beneath the dominant secular culture in Russia, but gradually emerging from the shadows to which it was exiled by the atheist regime. It is the wellspring of holiness which brought forth so many of the saints whom we American Orthodox venerate with devotion. It is the well from which it behooves us also to drink, if we hope to survive in the prevailing godlessness of our times. The words of the troparion to the Port Arthur Icon aptly express this common exhortation of Holy Rus' to her spiritual kin in America: "O Orthodox Christians of North America, preserve the Orthodox Faith; for this faith is your firm foundation."

