



# PASTORS TO PASTORS

Volume 10 Number 2 Fall 2003

*Although the men felt all the horror of the battle, though they panted with fatigue and were stained with blood, though they would have been glad to leave off, some incomprehensible, mysterious power continued to control them...*

*War is the most horrible thing in life. And yet in spite of all this the military is the highest class, respected by everyone. All the kings wear military uniforms and he who kills most people receives the highest rewards.*

From *War and Peace*  
by L Tolstoy

Orthodox Christians had just begun the season of Great Lent when, on March 20, the United States officially initiated military action in Iraq. There was a strange irony in that the season of prayer and fasting also now became a time of war. While many Americans, and many American Orthodox Christians, may not have favored military action in the first place, the commencement of fighting brought about a patriotic desire that our armed forces would successfully accomplish their mission and that the conflict would come to a favorable resolution. For people of faith it was evident that prayer was appropriate at this time and our Orthodox Church in America quickly provided special prayers for the occasion. We prayed for safety and protection of the men and women in our armed forces, but also for God to bless "our land and every nation with peace." Was there a certain ambivalence here, reflecting the political mood of the land? Or, do these prayers reveal an incongruity within Christian tradition? Is praying for peace the same as praying for military victory? What is war? What is peace? Is there justifiable war?

These deep questions are at the core of what human existence is about and they can be examined on many levels: political, philosophical, moral, theological, as well as legal and humanitarian. World events have

forced all concerned people to think about them and to try to find answers. Christian journalists and writers have been thus engaged and a considerable amount of discussion in print has focused on the concept of "justifiable war." Recently *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* (Vol. 47, No.1) published an entire issue devoted to this subject. It makes for fascinating reading and the authors, both for and against justifiable war, are articulate and persuasive. Reading the articles can only confirm the fact that there are no easy answers, but the dialogue is crucial and needs to go on.



## Thy Kingdom Come

by Father Alexander Garklavs

Among Orthodox saints, there are warrior saints and saints who died "without giving resistance." There are outstanding examples of those who have been advocates of military activity as well as those who consistently advocated a pacifist approach. There is of course the long history of clergy serving as military chaplains. And yet, in all of this, even in the most violent of times, Orthodox Christians are those who begin every liturgical service with the invocations, "In peace let us pray to the Lord, for the peace from above, and for the peace of the whole world..." War and the inevitability of war as well as the need and yearning for peace seem to exist eternally side by side, in a cyclic pattern like weather occurrences: calm, storm, sunshine, thunder, etc.

Is there a pastor's point of view? Pastors may or may not have a theological opinion about justifiable war, but unlike the theologians who do they have to be simultaneously effective as patriots and peace-lovers. This is not simply a diplomatic skill, it is a matter of necessity. Through the centuries pastors have ministered to soldiers going to war and returning from combat, buried those who perished, comforted the grieving, nurtured flocks in times of devastation, and also offered comfort to those who resisted war. Pastors have also found it necessary to speak out for enemy prisoners-of-war. Some pastors may have had to preach to soldiers going off to battle, while being convinced that war is evil. Others, who were inclined to a rousing patriotism, found themselves confronted with the horrors of war and became ardent pacifists.

There is a longstanding church tradition which regulates the pastor's actual involvement in military life. Public affairs and military service compromise a pastor's integrity and are therefore proscribed by canon law (Apostolic Canons 81, 83). Part of the reason for this is because pastors interact with all kinds of people, from different political camps, even from different nationalities who may be at war with each other. This is an aspect of pastoral life that has changed little since the first century. "Everyone who comes to you in the name of the Lord must be welcomed" (The Didache). At work in society or in parishes the pastor has to be neutral and impartial. In every community one will find parishioners with a great variety of opinions. Some may subscribe to radical politics. Others will maintain belief in monarchy. There are hawks, doves, conservatives, feminists, etc. Do we treat them differently depending on our own personal opinion? Do we attempt to impose on them our own "enlightened" political awareness? Being a genuine shepherd for all of his God-given flock means that the parish priest must defy the gravity of political opinion, conventional

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wisdom, trends, polls, government policies, and perhaps most of all, personal opinions. Occasionally a priest may have to express his opinion, but it should be done infrequently and never at the expense of preaching on the Gospel. Like all pastoral pronouncements, this should be done after prayer, careful discernment and in a dispassionate manner.

Apostolic Canon 83 which forbids priests from participating in military affairs concludes by quoting Jesus Christ's famous saying, "**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's**" (Mk. 12.17, etc.). Clearly, the pastor's work deals with "things that are God's." The "things belonging to Caesar" are never completely excluded from the situations that confront the priest; they are the incidentals that have a bearing on pastoral problems but they are never the object of the solution. There is a middle area between the two realms where the priest's work is chiefly conducted. The boundary between "Caesar's things" and "God's things" exists in the human consciousness where personal identity, sinful and finite, intersects with the soul, pure and eternal. This is where the world's vicissitudes affect the personal, where wars, illnesses, starvation, depravation, etc., are inflicted on people. Many literally perish, body and soul. But many survive and bring an awareness to the

grace-filled human potential for moral recovery. Regardless of how bleak and destructive life is around us, the soul can resurrect and "**press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**" (Phil. 3.14). Like Moses leading the people out of Egypt, the pastor is always leading his flock to a chosen land, beyond battles and suffering.

***"...mankind's bleakest moments are also the times when the presence of the divine in the world is most evident."***

The Biblical theme of exile resonates in the liturgical hymns of the Orthodox Church, especially during the season of Great Lent. Exiles are people who continually cross over boundaries and pastors are the people who assist lost souls in their travels and travails. It is a sacred, prophetic duty, guiding people from darkness to light, helping the lost to regain their sense of Godliness and spiritual fervor. "Caesar's things" are generally useless because they are the ways of the world and "**the form of this world is**

**passing away"** (1 Cor. 7.31). The world is the place where we start from but the end is to "**be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect**" (Rom. 12.2). The priests are God's agents who effect such transformations in people's lives. "**The pastor's work begins on earth, but it is fulfilled in heaven**" (St. John Chrysostom).

The fulfillment of the Kingdom is in the age to come, but heaven is already prefigured now in the life of the Church. The Church is the beginning, here and now, of the Kingdom of God, where wars and conflict will forever cease. Paradoxically this vision of life, that is, the true understanding of what the Church is, shines brightly precisely during periods of turmoil. As the cries of the prophets were most emphatic during times of Israel's flagrant deviations, and as the power of the God-man Jesus becomes revealed only after His crucifixion, so too mankind's bleakest moments are also the times when the presence of the divine in the world is most evident. One of the more eloquent examples of this is found in the writings of the Russian Orthodox lay theologian-philosopher Eugene Trubetskoi (1863-1920). Most of his writings have not yet been translated but his little book *Icons: Theology In Color* is as much a pastoral-theological reflection as a work of art criticism. The essays in the book were all written

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## PASTORS TO PASTORS

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## Seminarian Internship Program Completes Fourth Year

The Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry has overseen a successful fourth year of the Seminarian Internship Program, which offers second and third-year seminarian interns an opportunity to do pastoral work in parishes for the three Summer months. Eight seminarians were placed in as many OCA parishes where they observed and worked side by side with the parish pastors. This past summer, two seminarians from St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska participated for the first time. Once again, the evaluations from both priest-mentors and seminarian-interns indicate that the experiences were educational and inspirational.

In the near future, letters will be mailed to all pastors inviting them, with their parishes, to participate in hosting a seminarian intern during Summer, 2004. Pastors are encouraged to take part in this rewarding and nurturing experience. Please direct questions to **Fr. Steven Voytovich**, Program Coordinator (phone: 203-453-4405, e-mail: [voytsc@earthlink.net](mailto:voytsc@earthlink.net)). □



# "Thoughts and Recollections"

"Pastors to Pastors" looks to another of our "elders" for guidance and inspiration.

We are pleased herein to share our interview with...

## Fr Paul Ziatyk

Rector, St John the Baptist Church, New Kensington PA  
Chancellor, Diocese of Western Pennsylvania

**Q.** *Father Paul, you have been involved in the administration of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania as Chancellor. In regard to clergy assignments to parishes, what patterns do you see?*

**A.** In an ideal situation the ruling bishop always assigns and releases clergy from the parish. The bishop interviews those clergy who are interested in a transfer, assesses the needs of the parish and selects the best candidate. But in reality this doesn't happen very often. It is not easy to fill parish vacancies. Often the bishop simply assigns a priest who may be interested whether or not the candidate is suitable for the parish. Parish councils don't want to be left out. They want to interview the potential candidates. In such a situation, the priest has an arsenal of personal strengths which constitute "wares for negotiation" with the parish council. On the other hand the council holds the budget, the position, expectations and the agenda. With the blessing of the bishop candidates are interviewed by the council. The candidate ought to expect an adequate salary to support his family, 6% paid toward the pension plan of the OCA, full hospitalization, life insurance coverage, a furnished rectory and payment of utilities or a housing allowance, a car allowance, a portion of social security payment, several weeks paid vacation, annual study leave, setting work priorities and the love, respect and dreams of those entrusted to him. The OCA Guidelines on Clergy Compensation can be helpful. The Church Council will also set forth its expectations, so the candidate must be well prepared to think under stress. The dean can also be assigned to assist in the negotiation process.

Over the past twenty years there is stability in the Archdiocese. Clergy are not being tempted to think that the grass is greener in the neighbor's yard. What does persist are clergy who do

not work very well with a given parish. If the problem is with the priest, even after removing the priest, counseling him and reassigning him, he creates the same problems in his new assignment. I am not saying that there aren't problem parishes.

Are priests happy in their parishes? I paraphrase St. Augustine: *"the soul remains restless until it finds its peace in God."* It all depends on what the priest is looking for. Is his concern for the things of this world: security, riches, fame, success? Or does he strive to be a man of God? I don't think man was created to be happy? He was called to be holy like our Father in heaven. I believe that the priest must strive to live the beatitudes and implement the teachings of Christ's sermon on the Mount. He is called to be blessed, not happy. This is the calling of every Christian.

**Q.** *What events or people shaped your vocation?*

**A.** It was a prayerful, devout mother who taught the daily prayers to her six children. She not only taught the prayers, but stood by when we were young, as we prayed them each evening before bed time. As long as we lived at home she would ask us whether or not we prayed before jumping into bed. She also taught us love for God and neighbor. As a young child I was deeply inspired by the beauty of the Divine services. For me it was as if I were in heaven. My priest and the cantor took me under their care and taught me the liturgical order, the music, the teachings of the Church. I truly love these people and would be remiss if I over-looked the elderly women -- the babas -- who showered the children with attention and love. The foundation for my priesthood was laid in early childhood and I continued to build upon it all through my teen years and through college. I cannot underestimate the importance of the faculty at St. Vladimir's Seminary in my priestly formation.

**Q.** *You have worked with military veterans over the years; what are some of your experiences in hospital/chaplain ministry?*

**A.** All I can say is one of tremendous joy. In spite of physical fatigue I anticipate my tour of duty that begins at 6:30 a.m. each Wednesday at the Veterans Psychiatric Hospital. The men and women look forward to a visit from the chaplain. They seek a blessing, a prayer, a kind word. There is need on their part to share their life's journey, their hurts, confused minds, sinful life style, etc. The priest comes to them to dissipate the darkness in which they live and to bring the light of Christ into their lives. They are appreciative and thankful. After twenty-some years of serving as a chaplain, I feel that they do more for me than I do for them.

I have also been able to influence a number of parishioners to serve as volunteers at the hospital. Each Christmas and Pascha after the Divine Service they bring in various festive foods for the patients and have a party for the men.

**Q.** *As a priest of almost forty years, what would you do differently if you had the opportunity to start over again?*

**A.** Generally I do not live in the past or the future. I try by the grace of God to live one day at a time. More than often I do realize that everything that happens, both the good and the bad, are a blessing from God. I have benefited greatly by life's experiences. It would be unrealistic for me to think that I would do things differently. I repent of my sinful behavior and in the next moment rejoice because I am able to rise up by the grace of God and persevere in running the race and fighting the good fight. □



**Thy Kingdom Come, *continued***

during Russia's darkest hours, on the eve of the First World War and as the 1917 Revolution began. In that climate of chaos and terror Trubetskoi found in the colors and forms of old icons a spiritual power able to transfigure people's lives. The more that man became beast-like, capable of inflicting pestilence and destruction on himself, the more the grace of God's love shone in the hearts of those who would not be overcome by evil. The Church, with the services, icons, singing, constant prayer, is the haven of salvation in the world, which is constantly turning into hellish brutality. **"The Church is more than a house of prayer, it is a complete world. Not the sinful, chaotic, divided world we know but a world united by grace, mystically transmuted into the body of Christ. The structure itself of our churches, and all our icons, represents the Eucharistic understanding of the world as the future body of Christ -- a world that is the future life is to become identified with the Church."** This world, the world of the Church, is the domain of the parish priest, the promised land which, even if we are only able to see it from a distance, is the end of all journeys.

As individuals, pastors can be for the war or against the war, and their attitudes will not directly affect their effectiveness. That effectiveness is based on their ability to authentically follow the way of Christ into the Resurrection, to lead people into the Church and to help them preserve those souls in ecclesiastical serenity. This way of salvation is through the fire, rain, storms and battles, that go on our right and left through life. **"The way of salvation,"** Trubetskoi writes,

**"is the way of catastrophe. Among the flames of earthly fires, which destroy the decaying forms of life, are born the majestic revelations of the Holy Spirit in our world, which prefigure the new life that awaits us."** Like the prophets of old, today's pastors are God's messengers, reminding those who have ears to hear that the wars and strife are but temporary conditions. **"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned"** (Is. 40.1). An end is in sight and is even now within reach. Maranatha! **"Thy Kingdom come!"** □

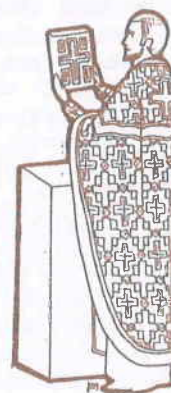
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We should always be mindful of what the Apostle Peter teaches priests: "Feed the Lord's flock which is with you with care; not by force but freely according to God; nor for the sake of foul profit but voluntarily; nor as if you were lording it over those in your charge but being examples to the flock, so that when the Prince of pastors appears you may receive the imperishable crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5.2-4). There is a bad custom in some churches, whereby the presbyters remain silent and do not speak when bishops are present, as if they either were jealous or do not deign to listen. The Apostle Paul says, "And if something is revealed to another, who is sitting, let the first one be silent. For you can prophesy one by one, so that all learn and all are consoled. And the spirit of prophets is subject to prophets, for God is not the God of dissension but of peace" (1 Cor. 14.30-33). The father's glory is a wise son; let the bishop rejoice in his judgment, when he chooses such priests for Christ.



*St Jerome of Stridonium, Letter No. 52*

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