

St. Silouan the Athonite Orthodox Mission

# PARISH REVIEW



*Holy  
Dormition*



St. Silouan welcomes new priest  
A message from Father Roberto

A testimony of miraculous healing  
And more ...

# St. Silouan welcomes

by Father Deacon Pawel Mucha

St. Silouan the Athonite Orthodox parish now has two priests as Father Nicolaie Atitienei was ordained by Bishop Gregory on July 26, 2015, to serve with Father Roberto at the church and St. John the Compassionate Mission. Father Nicolaie is not a new face at St. Silouan or St. John's—he has been around, in one way or another, for 10 years, almost from the start of his life here in Canada. Father Nico-

already completed degrees in theology and psychology in Romania. One of the first jobs he had at St. John's was breaking up large blocks of incense for use in the chapel. The smell of the incense lingered for several days!

Having become a qualified counsellor and therapist, he started to work with St. Macrina Family Services a few years ago—he remembers the day well as he got



Deacon Nicolaie with Bishop Gregory, his wife, and two of his four children at his ordination to the diaconate on July 24, 2015

laie was introduced to the Mission and Father Roberto by a compatriot from Romania. His first contacts were tentative but from the outset he felt drawn to the life at St. John's and its vision of how the Church should live. At first he lived quite far from the Mission but over the years he and his family deliberately moved closer and closer to Broadview Avenue. Both he and his wife chose their jobs with this in mind. He started to do some volunteering at the Mission while completing his master's degree in social work. He had



Father Roberto Ubertino presents Deacon Nicolaie to His Grace, Bishop Gregory for ordination to the Holy Priesthood on July 26, 2015

his first client on the day his younger daughter was born. About three years ago his involvement with the life at St. John's deepened when he started offering counselling on a Friday morning. He quickly became busy as people responded to the offer and Fridays became all day. Then he thought, *Why not Thursdays as well?* Then, as he was at the Mission on Thursdays and Fridays, he thought he might as well be at the Mission on Wednesdays also. Then he saw a need for counselling during the Winter Breakfast Program (weekdays

# Father Nicolaie

Monday to Friday), which combined with involvement in the life of the parish meant he was here every day of the week. Father Nicolaie is often one of the first people at the Mission in the morning and often the last to leave in the evening. People come to him for counselling, both from within the Mission community and from outside.

The call to priesthood and ordination at Camp Naz-

tory brunch on Friday, July 24 (after his ordination as a deacon), the new deacon was feted with a “deacon rap.” And the traditional “Many Years” was sung (bel-lowed?) in the traditional style at Camp Nazareth.

Asked what priesthood means to him, Father Nicolaie says that, for him, it is about praying for people and trying to love them as persons; it’s about being real to people, being present in their lives and getting



**“The Grace Divine, which fills that which is infirm, ordains the most pious Deacon Nicolaie to the Holy Priesthood”**

areth (the diocesan youth camp in Pennsylvania) came quickly by the decision of Bishop Gregory. But though the date of ordination came soon after the decision, as Bishop Gregory said at the ordination, the process leading up to it was a long one—13 years since Nicolaie studied theology back home in Romania. The ordinations (there were three of them—as subdeacon, as deacon and then, two days later, as priest) were joyous events in a church packed with children (and adults) who enthusiastically sang the services. At the celebra-



**AXIOS! AXIOS! AXIOS!**

close to the the source of their suffering. As a priest he believes that part of his role is to look for those who are poor and oppressed and to bring them from the margins to the centre.

His hopes for the future? As Associate Pastor he hopes that people look and enjoy what we do and are pleased with us. That they feel welcome and come again (and again). That our life at St. John’s and St. Silouan continues as it has been lived by others for the last 30 years, as it would be all too easy to lose what we have.

# Beyond Coincidence

## *My story of healing*

by Mia Milanovic

I've learned to believe that coincidence does not exist. It is just easier for people to think something is a coincidence than to assume there is a reason behind everything because, as humans, we want to always know what that reason is. God gave us full freedom—freedom of thought and of action. But with our crowded minds, we put chains on ourselves by thinking too much about why things happen, when they will happen, and how they will happen, instead of just being accepting and living in the moment.

As a little girl, I knew there was a God and a reason for everything that happened. But as we grow up and stumble upon many hardships, we start having doubts that we shouldn't. For the past 13 years, I lived with an injury that held me back. For the longest time I didn't want to tell my parents I was hurt, partly because I was scared they would get mad at me for being so clumsy, and partly because I didn't want to worry them. But it got to the point where I couldn't tolerate the pain anymore. That is when the doctor visits started.

For two years, I didn't have a diagnosis, and when I finally got one, it was wrong. The best doctor in Toronto for my situation wanted to use me as an experiment for a drug she was testing. Luckily, my mother is a doctor and knew that it would only make me worse if I took it.

After giving up on Canadian ways, my family took me to Igalo, Montenegro, to a rehabilitation centre, which helped a little—my elbows were fixed but the problem in my hands and knees remained. In my mind I decided that if I didn't get help then, I wouldn't ever—it was a waste of time and my parent's money. I trained myself to live with the pain and restrictions and wake up most mornings and tell my parents I was OK. Some days were better than others but I had to stop doing many things I loved. With my mother's homeopathic remedies my hands never got worse, but they didn't get better either. Every morning, especially during the

winter, it would take me at least one hour to be able to move from the stiffness I woke up in.

When I was in Grade Seven, I decided I wanted to become an architect, and the day I was accepted to the University of Waterloo was one of the happiest days of my life. When school started, it was everything I had dreamed of and better. There was just one problem: the more ideas I had, the more work I did, the less my hands could move and the more they hurt. By hiding the pain from others for years, I built walls to protect myself, without knowing that if I didn't let my emotions out, I couldn't let help and love in. I tried to pull through and work to the maximum, but when the final project of the year came, I just couldn't continue and broke down. I called my parents crying and told them that my hands could not follow my mind. My parents calmed me down, bought me braces to help, and with a lot of sweat and tears, I finished my first year of architecture school.

However, finishing that year didn't mean much to me if I couldn't continue the others. But I loved architecture so much I wasn't going to give up that easily. I overcame my dislike of visiting doctors and told my parents I wanted a new diagnosis and to do everything possible during the summer to get my hands to the point where I could tolerate the pain and continue school. While I was still in Canada I got a physiotherapist and worked everyday towards improvement.

When I went to Serbia, I went to a rehabilitation centre called Banja Vrujci. The banja felt like a prison—every day, the pain, along with my mood, got worse. I would make my parents drive around to nearby places just so I could break out of my mental prison for a little.

One day, when we were driving back to the banja and I was in a lot of pain during the ride, my father asked me if I wanted to stop by Monastery Jovanje just for a few minutes. Without thinking, I said yes and it was probably the best decision I've ever made. When we walked in, we met the Iguman (head monk) of the Monastery, Father Michael. We sat down to talk with him and, without me mentioning anything about my situation, he said, "Your soul is too strong for your body." A few minutes in the monastery turned into a few hours. From then on, after every therapy session, I would escape the banja and go to Jovanje.

Father Michael said that he was soon going to Greece on a pilgrimage. And without thinking again, I said I wanted to go. The bus was full but Father Michael saw that I really wanted to go and said he would squeeze me in beside him. Then, by "chance," a spot opened up and my mother was able to come as well.

Next thing I knew, I was on a bus to Greece, not aware of anything that was about to happen.

July 11, 2015, is a day I will never forget. St. Nectarios stated, No one comes to me who I don't call, and no one leaves from me without receiving what they came for. To be honest, I didn't know what I came for; I knew I wanted my hands to get better, but maybe I just came for the answers I was asking as a little girl. The first moment that I felt something truly unworldly was when I crossed over the doorstep into Starac Nektarije's room. I tried to step into the room but something was stopping me; I couldn't enter until I used all my might and when I did, I felt something break inside my chest. The break wasn't painful—far from it—but it opened up a part of me I didn't know existed and I started crying like never before. My mother and a friend I met on the bus, Jovana, came quickly towards me asking what was wrong but I could not give them a reason as to why I was crying. I now realize I was cleaning myself from all the emotions I kept in all those years and what broke was the wall I carefully built up to “protect myself.”

Thinking that cleanse was all I would get from this trip, I was more than satisfied; I saw the world differently and felt lighter. But then we went to Pantokrator. I was listening to the stories of St. Porfirije walking the grounds of the monastery very carefully because he saw all the martyrs and didn't want to step on them. So I tried with all my might—I really wanted to see what he saw but it was impossible. Then I heard a soft voice coming from the middle of a crowd of people. When I came closer I saw it was the voice of Igumanija (head nun) Stilizani. She was showing on a small tablet a video of a young boy who didn't walk for 20 years and was walking around the church. She said that she told the boy that the relics of the martyrs would help him, but only if he believed they would. That is when I told myself, “I believe,” and in the middle of my thought, Maca, Father Michael's mother, grabbed me and pulled me through the crowd towards the relics. I went to venerate them and she told me to put my hands on them; however, a nun was telling people to refrain from touching them. I decided that hovering my hands over the relics would be best, but my ring finger and middle finger of my right hand accidentally touched the relics in the process.

There are no words to explain what happened next. When my fingers touched the relics I felt an immediate rush through my body. My fingers started going numb and had certain electricity in them.

Still confused by what was happening, I stepped in line to have Stilizani bless me with other relics she was

holding. Once she did, I didn't feel this physical energy again; however, my stiff hands, which always felt like rocks, became a sponge. The waterfall of tears I experienced by Starac Nektarije returned and I was shaking so much I sat down on the floor crying. I didn't even have the power to find my mom to tell her what was happening.

Not long after, my mom and Jovana came running towards me, again asking what was wrong since I was crying. I didn't have the words to tell them what was happening so I put my hands up and made the two strongest fists I have ever made. They both started crying and hugging me and that was that first time I ever truly experienced the beauty of tears of happiness.

Jovana ran over to Father Michael to tell him what had happened and he told Stilizani. When I came towards her, she took the relics I venerated and put them over my hands and arms. The electricity and numbness I felt earlier now was occurring from my shoulders to my fingertips and stronger than ever. I felt like I didn't have hands anymore but wings and I was flying. Even though there were at least 100 people crowding around me, I could only see Stilizani and, for the first time in 13 years, my now-beautiful hands.

People kept coming towards me, hugging me and asking me what had happened, though I wasn't entirely sure myself. One of them was a theology student from Lebanon. When he asked me what happened, I told him I had a 13-year injury that was now cured. He asked me what I did, and I said I was an architecture student. He paused and said, “May I show you something?” and put forward his left hand. He told me he'd been in a car accident two years prior and since then could barely bend his fingers. He prayed every day to gain back his function and strength. And then he said something I will never forget: “I now realize why my prayers weren't answered. I don't need that full function. I can still eat and drive a car and be a theology student, but you need your hands for architecture and God gives us all exactly what we need.”

Why didn't God give me healthy hands sooner? Why did it take 13 years? Why did I have to go through all that pain? Maybe it was so that I never used my talents for evil acts, or maybe it was to teach me that there's no goodness without at least a little bit of work and sacrifice, or maybe it was to give me a miracle to strengthen my faith and everyone's faith around me. I don't know the reasons behind everything, but I am positive that they exist and it's not all just a coincidence or by chance. All I do know is that I will use these hands now, as I used them to write and share my story with you.



# As Christ Welcomed You

by Father Roberto Ubertino

St. Paul exhorts the early Church to practice hospitality towards one another, making no distinction between free and slave, rich and poor, Greeks and Jews. “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7). It is the sign of this new community that it welcomes all, especially those who are excluded in society.

This radical hospitality practised by the early Church was given by St. Paul a theological significance. It is the living out of a fundamental experience of love and of redemption. Christ had welcomed us like the merciful Father embracing His lost child. This experience of forgiveness and redemption now becomes the hallmark of the Church. The Church becomes a place where this radical welcoming of the Father could be practised and lived.

I live two conflicting observations. During the week, I am part of a community where people come because they feel accepted, valued, not judged, welcomed. The Mission described by those who come during the week is a place where one feels at home, where one can belong—a family. On Sundays, when in the same building the Church gathers for the Liturgy, I hear how people feel not welcomed, alone, isolated, unsure if they belong. I have been surprised by how the Sunday gathering of the Church is so different from what the Church lives every day in the same building. I have brought this problem up on several occasions, and in spite of the good will of many of us, I still hear

people expressing sorrow at not feeling part of our community. How is it possible?

I believe the answer is complex but not insurmountable. It’s a challenge, but it could be resolved. It’s a real challenge that requires from all of us a certain measure of patience, humility, and also gentleness.

I believe that the reason for such a sense of unwelcome on Sundays is about social class and about Orthodox history. Most parishes are made up of people who fit in a defined class and social order. It is not enough to be of a particular ethnic background; class, education, and financial assets help in fitting in or not, in being considered a valuable member of a community or not. Even where people transcend ethnic divides, there are still these clear lines created by one’s education and status. It simply is this way. It may not be often spoken, but I see how difficult it is for people of the week to fit in on Sunday. The people of the week don’t have the same language, even the body language, as the Sunday people. They have different concerns, a different way of walking, dressing, and eating, and I often see that they end up alone in the hall. But it is also true of people who come and who are educated and who may even be regulars to express sorrow at not feeling welcomed or part of our community. The community, paradoxically, that they belong to, and are present with, oftentimes, every week. Why is it so at St. Silvan?

It’s true of every parish, but in particular in our

situation because we claim to be a community that is based on the Orthodox faith and we are happy to celebrate the fact that the Church is not an ethnic club. So it is more poignant to me to sense that in spite of this understanding, we have the same problem as other parishes: people in the “in” and people in the “out”.

The other reason why, I believe, this happens is because of our Orthodox tradition. Orthodoxy has a deep sense of community. In the countries where Orthodoxy is native, the sense of community is what unites, identifies, and defines a sense of belonging and of people. I would venture to say that perhaps this is more important at times than the actual faith. Orthodoxy not in the diaspora is good at creating community. In our Canadian context, I have never seen a church that really welcomes anyone outside of its ethnic and social class. I dare anyone to prove me wrong (I'd love it!).

The challenge is when these ethnic churches then take root in a country like ours that is multi-cultural, and where the ethnic glue no longer applies to everyone who comes to worship. Those of us who come from strong ethnic cultures where Orthodoxy is the “glue” of society fail to understand that, in our context, community is something you need to work at, and that it does not just happen naturally. It has to be based on a common faith and on an understanding that the Gospel actually asks us to transcend our family and our tribe.

So what is “normal” and “natural” in an Orthodox culture, in our context, if we really want to be a Church that is not ethnically limited, will require from us a real effort in finding ways to welcome each other.

The asceticism of St. Silouan is to be what it's meant to be: a home, a place of welcome for anyone who embraces the Orthodox faith. This concretely means a real ascetical struggle to transcend what is comfortable and familiar, and really find ways to become the Church.

I mean “ascetical” in the full sense of the word because it is a struggle to go beyond self-love, self-care, self-esteem, and to understand that when I gather with the Church, I am participating at that moment not only in an act that feeds, heals, and comforts me, but that I am also participating in the mission of the Church, and it needs my participation, my giving-up of my comfort and security, to manifest something which is absolutely essential of what the Church is about. Without this ascetical struggle, no parish can truly become the Church that welcomes all. At St. Silouan, our history is that all of us have been welcomed here, refugees from other realities, and now even more so, it behooves us to radically welcome others, even when it hurts.

## Celebrating *Holy Dormition*



# Financial Report

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Budget 2015</b>	<b>Jan-Sept 2015</b>	<b>Jan-Sept 2014</b>
Donations-Indiv/Org		\$84,976.00	\$75,535.30
Donations (Anon)		\$5,844.00	\$6,805.10
Candle Collections		\$1,448.05	\$2,798.82
Incense & Charcoal		\$125.00	
Kids/Youth/St.Mary retreats inc			
St.Silouan Bookstore Donations			
St.Silouan Bookstore Sales		\$1,250.00	\$3,179.20
<b>Income Total</b>	<b>\$131,102</b>	<b>\$93,643.05</b>	<b>\$88,318.42</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Rector's Stipend	\$31,023	\$23,267.25	\$22,041.14
Caretaker	\$5,198	\$3,898.44	\$3,712.50
Utilities	\$4,800	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
Choir Budget	\$14,690	\$11,017.42	\$11,054.94
Phos Budget	\$2,840	\$435.08	\$865.63
<i>Total Sunday Liturgy Expenses</i>	<i>\$58,551</i>	<i>\$42,218.19</i>	<i>\$41,274.21</i>
Clergy Visitations/Retreats/Honorariums	\$7,000	\$5,635.40	\$9,609.39
Hospitality	\$1,000	\$881	\$-
OWL Youth Camp	\$8,000	\$8,000.00	\$5,000.00
Parish Youth Group Activities		\$623.13	\$-
St.Mary of Egypt Retreats	\$750		\$500.00
Travel expenses	\$500	\$562.92	\$445.91
Counselling services (St.Macrina)	\$5,000	\$3,560.00	\$1,730.00
Tithing	\$10,000	\$5,014.47	\$5,077.00
Retirement		\$26,000.00	
<i>Total Parish Activity Expenses</i>	<i>\$32,250</i>	<i>\$50,276.77</i>	<i>\$22,362.30</i>
Liturgical supplies (including flowers)	\$5,700	\$4,891.60	\$7,770.91
Renovations/Maintance/Utilities	\$2,700	\$983.03	\$303.71
Candles (offering)	\$2,000	\$1,331.75	\$1,890.00
Chapel furnishing	\$500		
<i>Total Chapel Expenses</i>	<i>\$10,900</i>	<i>\$7,206.38</i>	<i>\$9,964.62</i>
Accountant	\$3,399	\$2,549.25	\$2,475.00
Administrative Assistant	\$2,039	\$1,529.21	\$1,485.00
Auditors	\$600	\$450.00	\$450.00
Telephone/Internet	\$1,000	\$750.00	
St.Silouan Bookstore		\$1,041.48	\$2,488.13
Office Supplies (Include Postage)	\$1,200	\$1,557.97	\$632.84
<i>Total Office Expenses</i>	<i>\$8,238</i>	<i>\$7,877.91</i>	<i>\$7,530.97</i>
<b>Budget 2014</b>			
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$109,939</b>	<b>\$107,579.25</b>	<b>\$81,132.10</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$21,162.55</b>	<b>-\$13,936.20</b>	<b>\$7,186.32</b>