



# Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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**JUNE, 2008**

## *St. Vladimir's Seminary Commencement Address 2008*

**Delivered by the Archpriest Michael Oleksa, on May 17, 2008**

Your Beatitude!

Most Respected and Honorable Faculty of this Theological Academy!

The Graduating Class of 2008!

Family, Friends, Classmates, Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Hristos Anesti! Hristos Voskrese! Christ is Risen!

Or as we proclaim in my wife's uniquely American language:

Kristuussaaq Unguirtuq!

It is certainly an honor, as an alumnus from another era, a man who first visited this campus over 40 years ago, to be invited to return to this beloved alma mater to address you today, to bring a message from far-off Alaska to you, a message that cannot, certainly come from me personally, but from the saints who labored there. As I reflected on the task entrusted to me today, I realized that what I should say to you on this occasion should not be, as in my presentations to the senior class earlier this week, about my own often comic experiences among the tribal peoples of the Arctic, but from what we might discern the saints of that land might want to impart to you as you complete your formal theological studies and receive your academic degrees and distinctions this afternoon.

So I will offer you reflections on what the life and teachings of four canonized and venerated missionaries from "the Great Land" might say to you today, if they were here to address you themselves: St. Herman, St. Innocent Veniaminov, St. Juvenaly, and St. Jacob Netsvetov. I realize entire books and treatises have been published, some of them right here by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, about the first two, but that less is known about the latter pair, so I will keep my biographical summaries brief when introducing St. Herman of Alaska and St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, and offer more details on the lives of St. Juvenaly and St. Jacob, about whom less is generally known.

### **St. Herman**

As most of you know, St. Herman was the senior member of the delegation, recruited by Gregory Shelikov, the conqueror of Kodiak in 1784, from Valaam Monastery in Finnish Karelia, to come to North America in 1794. With three hieromonks and a newly ordained hierodeacon, he walked across Siberia from St. Petersburg to Okhotsk, then sailed to Kodiak, where the mission arrived on September 24. They found a contingent of armed Siberian frontiersmen oppressing and exploiting thousands of local Native Americans, no provisions, no ecclesiastical supplies, no housing, no church, nothing that Shelikov had

promised them, and no civil authority to whom they might appeal for assistance or redress. Many might have been tempted to reboard the ship that had delivered them to Alaska and to return immediately to Russia rather than remain in such difficult conditions.

Eventually several of the monks did, in fact, travel back to Siberia to protest the abusive policies of the colony's manager, Alexander Baranov, or to escape the violent persecution they had endured under his regime.

The Monk Herman took a different approach. He retreated to nearby Spruce Island and dug a cave, living as St. Anthony the Great had in the Egyptian desert, and later St. Anthony, founder of Russian monasticism had much later in the Kiev Caves. The liturgical texts composed for St. Herman's canonization in 1970 focus almost exclusively on his ascetic life, his monastic piety, and then the miracles that he performed while in seclusion on this remote and remarkably beautiful island, but the Alutiiq people venerated him for very different reasons. Father Herman loved them, loved the land and the people, and stood courageously in their defense, writing letters of protest, appealing to the governor in Siberia to intervene on behalf of the Natives, "the Americans," whom he and his monastic brothers had come to evangelize.

What would St. Herman say to you today, as you commence your evangelical mission to America? What does the example of his life offer you as you begin your various missions across this continent? I would suggest that the essential principle he embodies for us all is "Love your people." You cannot teach, bless or "save" what you do not love. Stand in unity with them. Know them well, know them intimately, and encourage, support, pray for and with them, believing that these are the people God Himself has entrusted to you as your flock, your children, your salvation. Only in the context of this personal commitment, this personal respect and affection for them, can you offer them anything of lasting value. Only within the context of this love can the Gospel you preach become credible, powerful, effective, fruitful.

The Alutiiq, the Americans, as the Valaam monks called them, knew that St. Herman loved them and called him "Ap'a," (Grandfather) as if he were a member of their own family. In contrast to the Siberians who mistreated and abused them, this man loved and instructed them, defended and enlightened them, not only by his teachings but by his example. Father Herman did not just preach the Gospel, but embodied it. Students imitate their teachers' actions. They do not always listen to what they say but they almost always copy what they see. We must all "practice what we preach" or our words lose their credibility. St. Herman succeeded in converting and encouraging not only thousands of Alaskan Natives during his lifetime, but the stories about his holy life and deeds inspired thousands more in the course of the next century.

When I first arrived on Kodiak Island in the spring of 1970, I brought with me the newly published LIFE of St. Herman which the OCA had published in preparation for his upcoming canonization that August. As part of my church school curriculum, I read a section of this booklet to my students who seemed surprising bored by this section of their lesson. I was, at first, perplexed by this lack of interest in the life of the local saint who was about to be glorified, until I realized that their parents and grandparents were the sources for this biography. The LIFE had been compiled from the oral tradition about Father Herman as recounted in these villages, and the kids had grown up hearing these stories since infancy. I was the only one unfamiliar with St. Herman on the island!

But at the end of the bio, the text stated rather matter-of-factly "And St. Herman died December 13, 1837." My students awoke! Looking up at me in shock and amazement they exclaimed, "He died?" No one had ever told us that! The children and teens had heard so much about Father Herman, his life and miracles, that they had assumed he was living somewhere on Spruce Island to this day. They had never realized he had lived so long ago, or that he had ever departed this world. And, on a certain level, they were right. The Saints are forever with us.

## **St. Innocent Veniaminov.**

Father Ioan Veniaminov came to Alaska with his wife, infant daughter and brother in 1824, arriving in Unalaska in the Aleutian Archipelago, already somewhat familiar with the Unangan (Aleut) language. His first missionary task was to master this language, develop an orthography for it and publish scriptural, liturgical and catechetical texts for his flock. The Unangan people, unlike their Kodiak cousins and rivals, had not been militarily but matrimonially conquered. Siberian frontiersmen had visited their islands following Vitas Bering and Alexei Chirikov's 1741 voyage in search of sea otter pelts for the lucrative Chinese market, and intermarried with the indigenous population. By the time the first clergy arrived, the entire area had been converted, the traders having baptized their own wives and children and even built the first chapels from local materials. The task in the Aleutian Islands was to deepen and confirm the Faith, and this was the focus of Father Ioan's efforts for the first ten years.

Veniaminov studied everything about his flock, mastering their language, studying their ecosystem, its plants, animals, weather, geology, and history. His writings, later published under the modest title "Notes on the Unalaska District" won wide acclaim and was translated eventually into a half dozen European languages. Transferred to Sitka, Father Ioan mastered a totally different and much more grammatically complex language of the Tlingit Indians and began translating and publishing texts for them before he was invited to sail to St. Petersburg to supervise personally the printing of his translations. His wife and children returned to Siberia for a well deserved sabbatical leave while Father Ioan traveled to Hawaii, Australia, South Africa, Great Britain and ultimately the capital. There, upon arrival, he learned of his wife's unexpected death in Irkutsk.

His first impulse was to hurry to his children, thousands of miles to the east, but his fame had preceded him and the Tsar wanted to meet this remarkable missionary, teacher, ethnographer and linguist. Summoned to the Winter Palace, Veniaminov received the Emperor's condolences and expressed his desire to abandon his publishing project to be reunited with his family in Siberia.

Nicholas I rejected this proposal, insisting that Alaska needed men like Father Ioan and that he would prefer to send him back to America as bishop of a new missionary diocese. Assuring him that his children would receive imperial scholarships to whatever schools they might wish to attend, the Tsar urged Father Ioan to consider this proposal. Metropolitan St. Philaret also befriended Veniaminov and encouraged him to receive monastic tonsure in preparation from consecration to the episcopate. In 1844, as Archimandrite Innocent, Veniaminov was elected Bishop of New Archangel and returned to Alaska to design and supervise the construction of St. Michael's Cathedral, for which he built the clock for the bell tower, and to open the "All Colonial School," where Alaska Native students were trained not only to become priests, deacons, choir directors and teachers, but artists, musicians, cartographers, healthy care workers and seamen.

His mission progressed so well, Kamchatka was added to his territory, and later he was transferred to Yakutsk (where he learned yet another language) and eventually elected in 1868 Metropolitan of Moscow, where he founded a mission society for the support of churches and schools in North America.

Veniaminov's [sic] acceptance speech at the Dormition Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin is extraordinary. Aware that his predecessor had been St. Philaret, a genteel aristocrat with an incredible scholarly resume, he was certain any comparison with himself would be highly unfavorable. Noting this, he admitted he had been tempted to refuse the position, but felt he could not contradict the decision of the Holy Synod and the Emperor. He pleaded instead that the hierarchs and especially the learned faculty of the theological academy pray that through his "illiteracy" no harm come to the church. His saintly humility shines through all his official statements and actions, a humble genius who dedicated his life to Christ and His Church.

If the message of St. Herman is "Love your people, love your place," the message of St. Innocent would be "Never stop learning. Know your people, know their language, their history, their culture," and then "teach them in ways that are appropriate and sensitive to their needs, their worldview, their culture." Both these early saints understood their task as bring the Orthodox Faith to the people they consistently called "the Americans." They were totally disinterested, even opposed to introducing or imposing any ethnic identity or culture on them. They never understood their task as transplanting "Russian" Orthodoxy, or "Russian Culture" to America, and in a later editorial written at Sitka, a Russian priest specifically renounced any effort to mix political, social or cultural goals with Christian mission work, noting that "European cultural and `civilization' are not nearly so Christian as many fancy." When examined more closely, Western society is based on principles opposed to the Gospel. Christ teaches humility, poverty, self-sacrifice and forgiveness, while European culture is all pride, greed, self-affirmation and power. Our goals are and have always been essentially spiritual.

There are, unfortunately, many within the leadership of some Orthodox jurisdictions today who have forgotten these foundational principles, and view their task as perpetuating ethnic customs and languages from abroad. But America has no need of Greek, Russian or Bulgarian Orthodoxy in this sense, for one can travel to Greece, Russia or the Balkans to experience these expressions of Faith more authentically in their homelands. And those homelands have no need for foreign colonies, pockets of their countrymen scattered overseas, preserving customs from their homeland in far off ghettos. If we embrace this sort of "mission," if we accept this sort of identity, we become irrelevant to both the home countries and to this one. From its foundation in 1794, the Orthodox Mission to America has focused on making the Orthodox Faith intelligible and accessible to Americans, a Church for Americans. St. Innocent saw the transfer of Alaskan sovereignty to the USA as a great missionary opportunity by which Orthodoxy would penetrate this country and recommended that a cathedral be constructed in San Francisco and clergy be sent who spoke English and that liturgical books be published and services be conducted in English as soon as possible. The Holy Synod of Russia accepted his proposals in 1868. This is our history. The waves of Eastern and Southern European immigrants have, at times, perhaps, obscured this, but we should, on the basis of the life and experience of St. Innocent, recognize that we have always been a mission in America for Americans.

And the principle that Veniaminov offers us is simply embrace the people and the place to which you are sent. There can be no authentic "mission" from outside. One cannot evangelize by denunciation or condemnation, but enter into dialogue with those to whom you are sent. Veniaminov presented Orthodoxy to the Native Peoples as the fulfillment of what they already believed, not the destruction of their beliefs or cultures. We have much on which to build in American religious culture, if we are willing to accept it, embrace it, and work from within it, instead of in opposition to it. Veniaminov might say to some of the more so-called "conservative" members of our church: "Trim your beards, cut your hair, take off your cassocks once in a while. Play football in the autumn, baseball in the spring. Go to a Broadway show, sing some country music, eat a taco, have a slice of pizza. Learn to appreciate and affirm all that is good, beautiful, lovely, and true in this culture. Then speak to them about Christ and His Church."

Education is essential. You must articulate and publish books and offer instruction to deepen your flocks understanding of the Faith, but you must do it on their terms, with a deep and positive appreciation of their cultural background, their language, their history, their unique identity. Commencement is the beginning of your continuing education, and in following the example of St. Innocent Veniaminov, there is much to learn.

### **St. Juvenaly**

The first Orthodox Christian martyr in North America has been much maligned. The first History of

Alaska, published in English in the early 1870's documents the death of this Valaam monk on the shores of Lake Iliamna in Southwestern Alaska, at the hands of irate Indians after the monk had refused marriage to—and then been seduced by—the daughter of the local chief. The evidence supporting this story of the murder of Father Juvenaly is contained in a supposed diary he kept himself, in which he provides the account in some detail. But the diary has been proven a forgery decades ago. The facts of his death as a true martyr for Christ have already been researched and printed here, in *St. Vladimir's Quarterly*, 20 years ago, and more recently reviewed and accepted by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.

In summary, this is what we know about the Priest-monk Juvenaly of Valaam. Born Jacob Korchinsky, the future martyr was a military officer who resigned his commission and entered monastic life less than three years before being recruited for the Alaskan mission. Young and energetic, he announced that he intended to visit the villages along the Pacific coast of Alaska and then cross the mountains and travel along the Bering Sea coast northward toward Chukotka, to establish a link with the Russian settlements that were rumored to have been established on the "nose" of Alaska that points directly toward Siberia. We know where he was heading when he left Kodiak in 1797, never to be seen again.

The oral tradition of the Yup'ik Eskimo and the Tanaina Indians, as well as the diaries and reports of St. Jacob Netsvetov, and three other Orthodox missionaries who visited the site in the 19th century, concur that Father Juvenaly was killed by an Eskimo hunting party near the village of Quinhagak. Approaching the beach in a little boat, Juvenaly attempted to preach to the men who were ordered by their leader, a shaman, to dissuade him. They made hostile gestures and eventually aimed their spears and arrows at him, trying to scare him off. But the boat continued its approach, until the shaman gave the order to kill him. The guide and assistant tried then to escape, jumping overboard and swimming to the opposite riverbank, but the hunters got into their kayaks and killed him as well. According to the Yup'ik version, the shaman then removed the priest's brass Pectoral cross and tried to work some magic, but failed. Each time he attempted the rite, he felt himself levitated and became afraid. Removing the cross he tossed it aside, saying that there was some sort of mysterious power in this object that he did not understand and with which he chose not to deal.

Trying to confirm this version of events, I've asked people from Quinhagak if they've ever heard about a priest being killed near their village a long time ago. They have. One of them repeated this story to me with an interesting detail. Just before the priest, standing in the bow of the boat, was killed, it looked to the men on shore like he was chasing away flies. Indeed! The hieromonk was either blessing his murderers or praying, making the sign of the cross, a gesture the Yup'ik hunters had never before seen.

Why were the armed Eskimo hunters so fearful of an unarmed stranger and his guide? We cannot know with certainty, but there is a reasonable solution, linked to the hieromonk's pectoral cross. Apparently for thousands of years, Alaskan shamans had been carving ivory chains, in imitation of Siberian shamans who traditionally wore metal ones. St. Juvenaly was mistaken for an intruding, alien shaman. The only ways to protect oneself from such a dangerous foreigner were either to chase them off or kill them. St. Juvenaly was the victim of the first tragic inter-cultural misunderstanding in Alaskan history.

What principle can we learn from the tragic death of St. Juvenaly of Quinhagak? The work of evangelization is necessarily risky, dangerous and may require self-sacrifice, if not to the extent of martyrdom as the shedding of blood, then a less violent but no less Total self-offering. To 'commend ourselves, each other and all our life to Christ our God,' as the services of the Church constantly encourage us to do, can, of course, be done in one final, glorious moment, as in the death of St. Juvenaly, but it is today highly improbable. We must offer ourselves less dramatically, day-by-day, one hour at a time, one minute at a time. We are witnesses, martyrs, either way. There can be no mission, no evangelization, without self-offering, self-sacrifice, and we should not expect glory, fame or any earthly reward for the

effort. We will misunderstand and be misunderstood, but we must persevere in love, and if necessary, self-sacrifice.

### **St. Jacob Netsvetov**

Father Jacob was born on St. George Island, in the middle of the Bering Sea and sent by his Russian father to the seminary in Irkutsk, where he married and was ordained priest, returning to Alaska in 1826 and becoming rector of the parish at Atka, in the middle of the Aleutians. He mastered Veniaminov's alphabet and as a Native speaker, translated scriptural and liturgical texts into Unanagan during his twenty year ministry among his people, paddling by kayak along the archipelago as far as the Kurile Islands, just north of Japan. With the tragic death of his wife and the loss of his house and all his earthly possessions in a house fire, he requested retirement. Bishop Innocent, in principle, agreed, saying that Father Jacob could enter monastic life in Russia "as soon as we find a replacement." St. Jacob did not retire for another 18 years.

And he spent those years not among his own people, but as missionary to the Yup'ik Eskimos on the Alaskan mainland. He learned their language, developed a writing system and opened the first school among them, traveling extensively in the Yukon River Delta and along the Kuskokwim as well, visiting the villages, baptizing, chrismating, marrying and burying thousands of Eskimo converts.

One of the more extraordinary episodes in St. Jacob's life involved Indian tribes from the interior who sent a canoe downstream to fetch, or perhaps kidnap Father Netsvetov. Demanding that he accompany them up river, they paddled for three days before arriving at a nearly deserted village where he spent the day in a small hut. That evening they summoned him to the riverbank where he counted over 100 vessels, canoes, kayaks and one wooden boat with a sail, hundreds of people converging at their own initiative to hear his preaching. And for three days he preached. At the end of his presentation they unanimously requested baptism. For the next three days he baptized these new converts in the river, first the adult men, then the women and then the teens and small children. "From this activity," he reported in his journal, "I became dreadfully tired." But he added, but the sight of so many new Christians, standing prayerfully together, worshipping the True God, filled me with such joy that all my aches and pains left me."

Indeed, the full moment of this mass conversion is not apparent until, on the next day he records that he celebrated the Liturgy and all the newly baptized came forward to receive the Eucharist together. Only then does he mention that these were members of different tribes, former enemies, who have been reconciled in Christ. And his sermon that day focused on the necessity for Christians to live together in peace, "loving their enemies," a uniquely Christian message that these tribal peoples had received with joy.

St. Jacob was often sick. There were no facilities to treat him, no medicine available to alleviate his swollen, most likely arthritic legs. Each winter he became feverish and bedridden, as he records in his official reports to the bishop in Sitka each year. But every March, sometimes at subzero temperatures, celebrating Holy Week and Paschal services in a tent, he was renewed, inspired, energized, overwhelmed by Paschal Joy, the source as well as the goal of his mission.

St. Jacob's life reminds us all that our Christian life within the Orthodox Tradition is centered on the Resurrection. It is the living experience, the encounter with the Risen Lord, that constitutes the basis, the inspiration, the cause and the purpose for our mission in America. What do we have to offer the people of this land? What is that we Orthodox claim to have (and know we have) that they have not yet fully experienced, comprehended, fully understood? If we are here, as in the days of St. Herman and St. Innocent, to offer our Faith to them as the fulfillment of what they have known at least partially, what is the essence of that "fulfillment" ? And with St. Jacob, I would submit to you that is the fullness of Paschal Joy.

We spoke of this on Monday evening with a few of the graduates. There are those moments, I think we all have, during any service, but most especially during Holy Week and Pascha, those miraculous and sacred days that always renewed and restored St. Jacob, when we are suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelmed by joy. This comes upon us without warning and we must be silent when it does. If we tried to speak, we might, in fact, burst into tears. When the celebrant is overwhelmed in this way, he must compose himself as quickly as possible and continue, or the whole service will come suddenly to a stop. In the choir or among the laity, perhaps, one can linger in this state of peace, love, joy, for a moment of two longer. And it passes—but we seek, we yearn to experience it again and again, though there is no way to instill, provoke or arouse it. We have the sense that it was a gift, the love, joy, peace, of the Holy Spirit.

And in that overwhelming and ecstatic state, we can say nothing, do nothing. The Holy Fathers say that silence is the language of the world to come. We are, for those few moments, in a heavenly condition. The reality of the world to come has descended upon us personally.

We have this experience, as Orthodox Christians, as members of the community, in a public and liturgical setting. We know it, we share it, but we seldom speak of it because there is "nothing to say." The experience itself is ineffable, beyond words. We remain silent and more—we are, it seems, like the myrrh bearing women afraid to speak about to any one because we are afraid. Will the others think we were a little crazy? Will they dismiss our witness as false, as improbable, as ridiculous? My experience in asking about this experience of overwhelming joy among Orthodox is that we all seem to have this, we have all had these moments, but we seldom mention it to anyone else. We keep it as our personal secret. Yet I am convinced that it is to this ineffable and overwhelming joy that we must witness.

Everything else is secondary. The acceptance of the doctrines, the study of the scriptures, the learning of the liturgical order, the rubrics, the vestments, the iconography, the ethical moral and dogmatic teachings, the hierarchial and canonical structures, the entire external expression of the life of the Church depends on and is derived from this Love, Joy, Peace, this ineffable and overwhelming experience of the Reality of the Kingdom of God, the Presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. It is because we have entered into this Joy, this Reality, that we are certain that the Christ is indeed Risen, and that none of the sins or errors or scandals in the Church, no matter how troubling or disappointing, effect in any way our Faith and our commitment to Christ and His Church.

Brothers and Sisters! Friends and Family! Students, Faculty Members, Benefactors and Trustees! Let us recall our own saints who labored, struggled, sacrificed and died to make the Reality, the Love, Joy, Peace, the very presence of the Kingdom which is to come accessible, available, present among us, here in America, and continue their mission, unworthy as we are, not just to add strength or numbers to our statistics on membership and income, not just to make "orthodoxy" known and more politically or socially or culturally influential, not just to "survive" in America, but to fill America with holiness, to sanctify this wonderful country and its people, by bringing to them, as best we can, according to our sacred Tradition, our Holy Faith, the Reality to which we are witnesses, by the Grace of God, by His Mercy and Loving Kindness, through His Church! We have seen with your eyes, we have heard with our ears, we have touched with our hands, we have tasted with our lips, the very presence of Jesus Christ and wherever we look we see Him, we recognize Him and we rejoice in Him. And it is this experience that inspires, and more, impels us to proclaim and celebrate and dedicate ourselves again and again to Him and His Gospel, to the building up of His Church, not as an institution, not as an ethnic enclave, not as a structure or system, but as the Reality of the World, the Kingdom to Come into which we have already entered.

By the holy intercessions of St. Herman, (embracing and loving this land and its people), St. Innocent,

(striving to learn and more deeply understand this culture and articulate the Gospel, the Orthodox Faith within this context), St. Juvenaly's self-offering and sacrifice, and St. Jacob, without complaint, (no matter how difficult the circumstances) , inspired by Paschal Joy, may we continue the work they so heroically began to bless, to sanctify and to transfigure this land and its people. And may we all be accounted worthy to enter into that Joy forever in the Kingdom which is to come.

Christ is Risen! Amen.

## ***UPCOMING MEETINGS***

- **ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY JUNE 1** after the liturgy.
- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY JUNE 7 at 9 AM – macaroni & cheese**
- **CAREGIVERS – info will be forthcoming**
- **FIRST FRIDAY TEEN GATHERING – further info will be forthcoming**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY JUNE 18 at 7 PM.**
- **OUR CHURCH PICNIC** will take place on **SUNDAY JUNE 22**, following the divine liturgy. Meat products will be provided by the church. Sign up sheets for salads and desserts are on the bulletin board.
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – THURSDAY JUNE 26, We'll be gathering to eat at 7 PM, and start the meeting 7:30 at Forno's in Cherry Hill**

**WEDDING BANNES:** **Stephanie Pritchard & Gary Pease** will be married in our church on Sunday June 8.

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES:** We congratulate our high school graduates:

- **GianLuca Keeler / Katherine Lane**
- **Christopher Shimchick / Julie Skuby**
- **Bryan Thompson / Rachel Tranchik**

In addition, Stephanie Skuby has completed the first part of her medical studies at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway, NJ and will continue at the School's affiliate at Cooper Hospital in Camden.

**INREACH COMMITTEE:** Approximately \$700.00 was realized from the **Spaghetti Dinner** which was held on Saturday May 10. These proceeds will be used to provide additional support for **Christina Semon**, who is an Orthodox missionary beginning work at the St. Dimitrie Program in Romania as part of the OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center) and for **Michael Shimchick** who during the week of May 25 through June 1 travelled with his brother, John, to the New Orleans area and worked with **IOCC** (*International Orthodox Christian Charities*) and *Habitat for Humanity* on the rebuilding of a home that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

### **ICONS PREPARED BY YVETTE ABDALLAH:**

Here is my list of completed icons and those in production.

**Annunciation:** 13 x 17 will be varnished on Holy Friday and for sale the first of second week of May  
Price: \$950, for church family: \$800

**Theotokos and Jesus:** 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 completed. For sale now.  
Price: \$800, for church family \$700

**Holy Trinity:** 11 x 14 in progress should be finished in June or July low air humidity providing.  
Yet to be priced.

**ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING: MOTHER'S DAY COFFEE HOUR:** Many thanks to Gary Mosser and all his helpers in treating the mother's to a day off.