



The Eagle

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No 7

FRIENDS OF ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY

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This month we set before you several episodes, written by the students. Although very different from each other in nature, each account expresses a genuine, hands-on experience of life, and witnesses to the adventurous, life-and-death, old-and-young wholesomeness of what God is bringing before these young men.

Soul-Shaping Experiences

An Unexpected Journey

Recently Keith, our native student at the Academy, had an urgent situation in which he needed immediately to fly out to Akhiok, his home village on the opposite end of the island. We decided to ask our friend, Chris Kinter, to help us. He is a local pilot who owns his own plane and is willing to fly us for the simple payment of a breakfast. Fr. Damascene and myself were chosen to go with him: Fr. Damascene would stay in Akhiok and I would go only for the ride.

At the first look of the airplane I became trepidatious, for I had never flown in a plane so small. You could tell it was well kept and in good condition but I could not help thinking it looked like a flying sardine can painted purple. With the wind blowing around thirty

knots, we pushed the plane out of the hanger onto solid ice, where we carefully loaded in our things and ourselves. Once inside, the trepidation increased, for we became the sardines in the can.

As the plane took off I began to pray. Then it hit the turbulence, which made it shake and drop in altitude. Every time the plane dropped I began to pray more diligently, fearing my life might end at any moment. Soon the turbulence eased and we were gently gliding over the great, white mountains traversing the whole length of Kodiak Island. If only the Psalmist could have seen Alaska! *Upon the mountains shall the waters stand, between the mountains shall the waters run, in Wisdom hast Thou made them all.*

Arriving in Akhiok we were soon greeted by many of Keith's young relatives, all riding upon four wheelers. Since I had only half an hour before the plane was to take off again, we immediately decided to visit the church. Built in 1926 as a flourishing house of prayer, it now stands upon its foundation as a weather-beaten lighthouse pointing to the "storm tossed," out at sea. Inside was a lovely scene of beauty: an old and worn, yet vibrant and youthful, chapel. Half of the icons were new and half were faded from years of veneration. This steadfast chapel was dedicated to the feast of the Protection of the Theotokos, who must have protected Her church from the ravages of time.

We then departed from the chapel and proceeded back to the plane. On the way I noticed the thick silence, which neither the ocean nor the four wheelers could break. Arriving near the plane I became so enthralled by an eagle hovering over it that I hardly noticed the incoming mail plane, or the unloading of it, for it seemed to also be done in silence. Then, finally, being broken out of my awe, I decided to help with the unloading of the mail plane, which was my first and, God willing, not my last work done in Akhiok.

The most inspiring part of the trip had to be the flight back, for the pilot said, "We're going to take the scenic route." He took me through valleys, over huge lakes, and bays. And after lamenting to him what a pity it was that nowadays no one wants to live in the woods but only big cities, he showed me his own cabin hidden in the depth of the wilderness on the coast of a large bay. Across the bay

from his house lies an old abandoned cannery, now only used as a sport fisherman's retreat. I asked if there were any remaining abandoned canneries like that one anywhere else. He told me there was another near Akhiok on Olga Bay. How exciting it would be, I thought, to have a chance for the whole school to take a retreat into the heart of the wilderness, living and fishing, even for one day. Then with this inspiration we flew off, only to return to the land of the more "civilized." *How wondrous are Thy Works, O Lord!*

— Leonty Seabrook

A Sobering Experience

I knew that coming to Alaska would be a life changing experience, but I would never have guessed that the following would happen to me:

It was after dinner and there was still a little bit of sunlight left in the day. Fr. Paisius got the idea for all of the students and children to play baseball for a little while to work out some of the lenten "blues." We all packed up, got in the van, and rushed over to the field. We were having a good time running and playing in the field. One of our students, Marco, was up to bat. He got a hit and started running around the bases. Right before he got to second base he slipped and fell on the ice. We knew he wasn't hurt and every one of us dropped to the snow with laughter...

Then we heard a big crash, and then another. We ran to the street to see what had happened. I saw that three cars had just had an accident. One of the cars was still running; the engine raced like it was out of gear and had the gas pedal floored. I ran over to turn the engine off. It was then that I saw the man: he looked so innocent like a little baby sleeping. I saw him breathing; he seemed all right, just knocked unconscious. I grabbed his shoulder and asked if he could hear me, but I did not get an answer. I looked around and everything was still, so I yelled for someone to call for help. I did not know what to do, so I started to tell him to wake up, and asked if he could hear me. I looked behind and noticed the police car coming. The officer came up and asked if he was breathing, I told him yes but not that

much. He stepped up to the car, took his pulse, and radioed for an ambulance. The officer told me to get into the back of the car and hold his head straight. While holding his head I felt him breathing and how cold my hands were against his face. I called for Matthew and told him to get everybody together and pray, pray for this man. The men got together in front of the car and started singing troparions to the Mother of God and to the saints. I could not feel the man breathe anymore; he was gasping for air, and no longer seemed like himself. The policemen pulled him out of the car and his glasses fell off to the pavement. I picked them up and went over to everyone and started singing also. Everybody was looking at us as we were singing, but it didn't matter, it felt so right. It was the best thing for us to do right then and we were doing it with our whole hearts. We were not just sitting there as spectators, but we were helping this man's soul. As I looked at everyone I did not understand why we were chosen to see this man pass from this life to another. At first I did not want our little children, Antonia and Melania, to be there. I wanted to cover their eyes and tell them that he would be okay. But it seemed like they knew, like they understood more than I did, only that their innocence covered it up.

We knew the man was gone, but our prayer did not stop. We accepted his death though the paramedics kept working feverishly. While we were trying to save his soul by prayer, the paramedics tried to save his body with their medical tools. We left in silence, but our prayer was still with us. At the Academy we had a talk with Fr. Paisius, a talk about God having blessed us to be there at that time, at that man's hour of death. We all went to the chapel and prayed on our knees for this man's soul. It is hard to understand why it was us, and why it was me holding his head while he left the earth. God granted us to see this and to accept a life changing experience.

—Eric Prost

Note from the Dean: This sad event brought our men together in a spirit of brotherhood like they had never experienced before. One of our men in particular was very moved by the tragedy. He pondered on whether or not the man in the car had anyone he had not reconciled with while he was alive, realizing that now he would

not have that chance anymore. Thus this student immediately called his father—with whom he had argued and had had no communication for years—and made peace with him.

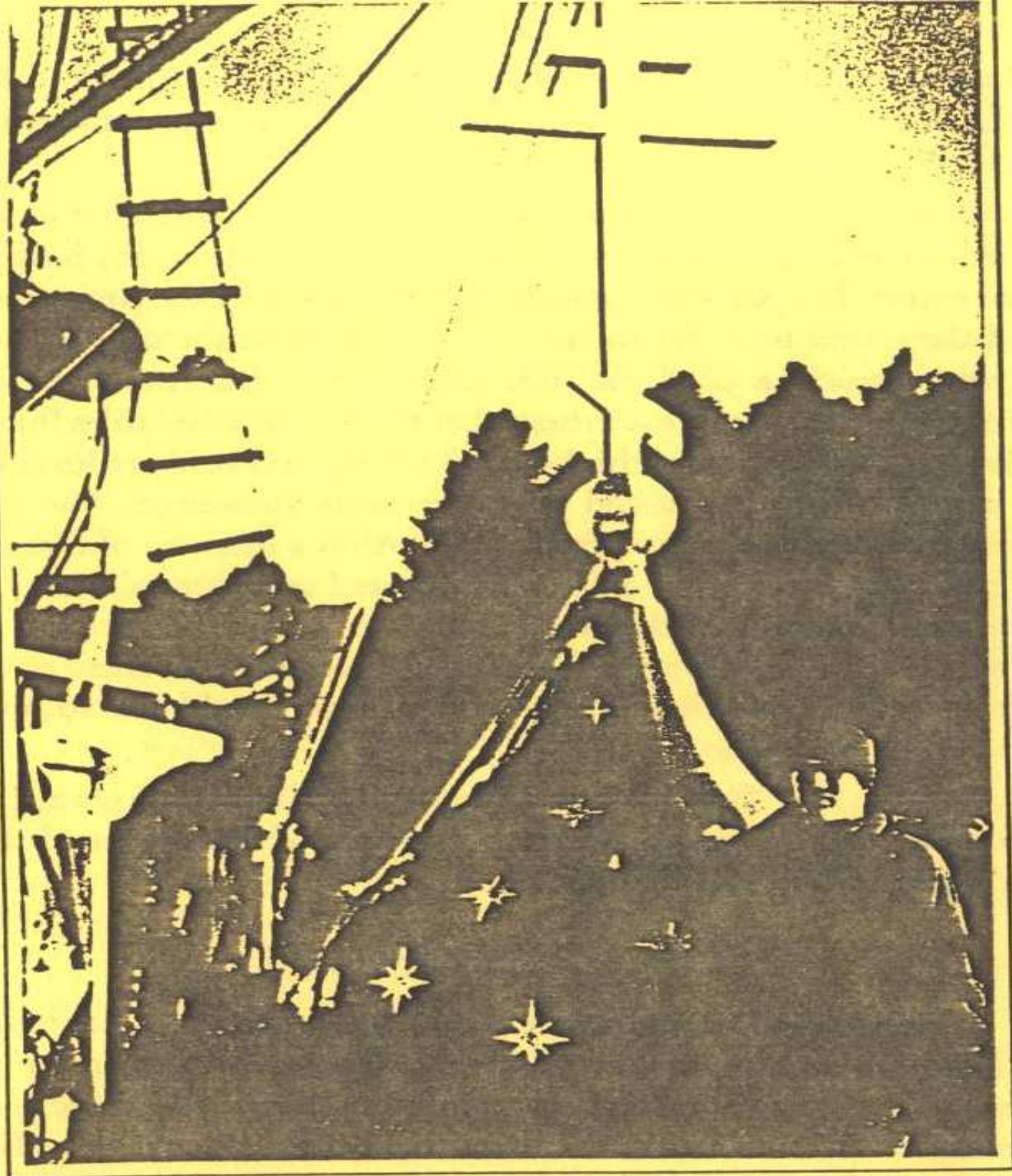
Another event immediately followed the accident. As Eric described, we prayed for the man after the accident but didn't have his actual name. Two students went to the hospital after the prayers and asked the receptionist for the name of the man in the car accident. She was suspicious of them and, finding out that they were not related to the man, informed them that it was against all rules for her to give out information of this kind. The men were ready to leave but she stopped them and asked why they were interested. The men replied that they needed to pray for him. After a moment of disbelief her eyes began to tear up and she whispered confidentially that his name was Lyn and that they could tell no one that she gave out the name or she would be in trouble. She was amazed that these young men instead of typically idling away their time would care so much for a complete stranger.

And so, may God bless and forgive the sins of this man, Lyn, whose passing has blessed our men in turn and has deepened their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Helping Johnny Pestrikoff

The Pestrikoff family, as one of our main supporters, has helped our Brotherhood through thick and thin. They were there on the first arrival of monks to Monks' Lagoon in 1984. They were there at the opening of Monk's Rock, our local coffeehouse/bookstore. They were there when we were forced to evacuate the blessed isle of Saint Herman. And they are now here at the establishing of Saint Innocent's Academy.

To show our appreciation for all of their encouragement, we have accepted a chance to help Johnny, the eldest of the Pestrikoff brothers. Three times a day we bring him meals and help him with all his needs. In return, he helps us by becoming our grandfather, telling us stories about Father Gerasim (Schmaltz); how Kodiak used to be; how he fished everything, from salmon to crab, and even owned his own seiner (a fishing boat, that is, for you non-



Eric Prost, proudly pauses next to the towering dome, as it is being launched onto the "Kathy O," afterwhich it proceeded majestically through the Kodiak channel. It now safely adorns the St. Nilus Chapel (see issue number 6).

Kodiakans). He lives in one of the town's oldest little shacks. It was put there many years ago and was his beloved mother's house where he was raised. It is old and gray now, and the rooms are painted a color that has long ago lost its identity. But there is goodness in it. Just seeing the very icons that Father Gerasim Shmaltz once saw and blessed, still in the same corner with the very same dust on them,

actually gives a sense of reverence. The place is full of cheer when Johnny brightens it with one of his broad smiles and rocking laughs. You can see a life full of goodness-of-soul in his bright eyes as he launches into yet another story of days gone by.

This opportunity is a great blessing to us, the young generation, for we can be of great help to him and at the same time learn from our dear elder. We can also learn to face our life more soberly through the truth of what it means to become older. May we become the true Christian men that we are called to be. —Leonty Seabrook

The Captain's Restaurant

The new "Captain's Restaurant" (named in honor of the captain of The Three Hierarchs) has been established above Monk's Rock Coffeehouse/Bookstore in downtown Kodiak. Fr. Jonas and Matushka Joan Marie have succeeded in bringing to Kodiak what will quickly become the best breakfast in town. They have transformed a dingy, unkempt "greasy spoon" into an exciting, lively "Southern," Alaskan gastronomical experience. The amount of work in buying a new house, a new business, moving out of the country (the "lower 48"), with a family of 4 children (including a perky little baby), and relocating in the dead of winter in a new land is tremendous. Upon arrival, this family hit the ground running. They set everything up—despite all the attendant problems and glitches so common to this kind of endeavor—and managed to open for business in just a couple of weeks. What's more, they remain cheerful about everything, are genuinely smiling and positive to all the customers and are also keeping an eye out for all of us at the Academy. This kind of support could make any mission thrive. We are very thankful that God has given us a family like them—and with them, the Woods from Oklahoma, who have that same pioneer zeal and goodwill—to be the core of our Christian community and thus the heart of St. Innocent's Academy. —Fr. Paisius

A Tribute to the Women

At the heart of our Academy staff are Matushka Mary De Lucia and Johanna Wood. Between cooking, bookkeeping and making the

house a true home for our men, they also bring the refined graces to our rough edges. One of the most important impressions for the men is to see that a family can live in a good wholesome environment—a place where mother and father live in harmony and where the children are lively, joyful, alert and obedient. To the young men, this is a picture worth more than ten thousand words. Everything would come to a grinding halt without their work.

We are including in this Eagle a prayer list with a heart-felt plea that you remember us all in your prayers.

ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY PRAYER LIST

Staff:

Fr. Damascene
Fr. Paisius De Lucia
Matushka Mary De Lucia
Justin Wood
Johanna Wood
Christopher Jones
Fr. Jonas
Matushka Joan Marie

Support Staff:

Brendan Shettig
Joshua Mead

Tom & Sue Emerson
Mike & Kathy Rostad
Dave, Nick, Lilly,
and Johnny Pestrikoff
Roy & Linda Madsen
Boris Lesniak

Students:

Matthew Sutton
Lconty Seabrook
Caleb Wood
Eric Prost
Keith Simeonof
Marco Mitrovitch

Students who have completed high school or have departed from the Academy:

Alex Vail
Robert Bowers
Richard Blake
Jason Abalos
Curtis McMorrow
William Dwyer
Mario Esparsa
Mark Semmel

Children:

Antonia
Melania
Hannah
Benjamin
Josiah
Paul
Gregory
Chloe
Nina
Lydia

St. Innocent Academy "Wish List"

- *Stereo system with c.d. player (for History of Music Class)
- *Beeswax candles
- *Set of wood carving tools
- *Good-sized dictionaries (not too modern)