

## Monastery Newsletter Winter 2009

Beloved of the Lord,



We greet you with joy in the Lord during this Winter Nativity Season. Many positive changes and improvements have taken place here at the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk that we tell you of with great hope and optimism. Recently, on the night of October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Fr. Igumen Sergius was elected Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery, America's oldest Orthodox monastery, founded in 1905 by St. Tikhon of Moscow. Abbot Igumen Sergius is the first member from within the Monastery Brotherhood to be elected to this position in 47 years (during the previous five decades it was held by Church Hierarchy that were not a part of the immediate brotherhood.)

This change will enable the Brotherhood to grow in a new and unprecedented direction, operating as a Stavropegial, self-determining, autonomous Monastery under the direct hierarchical authority of the Metropolitan. The Bishop of Eastern Pennsylvania, his Grace, Bishop Tikhon, no longer functions in a hierarchical capacity but as the primary adviser to the Abbot and community and will remain an important part of the Monastery Brotherhood. This new change is important for the Monastery as well as the Church in America. If the Monastery is spiritually healthy and functioning at the fullest level of its potential, this will have an immediate, powerful and positive impact on the entire American Orthodox Church. St. Tikhon's Monastery not only trains a large portion of Her future clergy but also through its prayers, its new publications, its outreach and its great potential for the future, the Monastery can and God willing will be a flag ship, leading the Church forward into the next millennia. It must be known that the support of authentic and dedicated monastic life is an imperative necessity for the growth of the Church in America. Historically, no monastery has ever flourished without this kind of self-administration and autonomy that St. Tikhon's Monastery now possesses and that whenever these were restored, monastic life possessed the potential for authenticity, becoming a vital and life-giving leaven for the entire Church in the country in which it resided.

We have been very active in creating many new projects to help us become a more financially independent and stable institution of the American Orthodox Church. We are finishing an internal audit and working towards an external audit (a very expensive process) by 2011. However, the support that we receive from our benefactors and the friends of St. Tikhon's Monastery has been essential for our survival at this current time. Your support is not only remembered and appreciated here on earth but will certainly be one of the only things that we will take with us at our death: that which we did for the love of Christ and His Holy Church. It is hard to express in words the importance of the work that our benefactors do. The work of our benefactors cannot be appreciated enough and certainly, in a world that forgets everyone else but me and self, it is important that *you* know that you, your loved ones, and your intentions are always remembered here and that your support will undoubtedly be remembered eternally before the Lord.

Recently in September we were able to get our candle shop up and running. Br. Peter, one of our new novices, is heading the production. Our candles are made of 100% Beeswax and are an appropriate, natural offering to use in the Church where nothing that we give should be artificial or potentially damaging to our Church's art-work (like white Paraffin candles.) Also, all of the proceeds help to support our operating costs so please consider using our candles for your parish.



Bishop Tikhon, who remains an important support and advisor to the community, continues to work hard in overseeing the flock of the Diocese of Eastern PA. Father Alexander and Father Michael continue to help with cooking and cleaning and singing and reading on the Klerios. Fr. Innokenty is hard at work in the bookstore, shipping our customer's orders in a timely fashion. Fr. Kyrill continues to cook, keep bees, and tend the grounds around the monastery. Fr. Nicodemus works diligently in the Church, keeping things clean and keeping everything in order. Br. Kenneth, another one of our new novices, has been attending Seminary, watching over the guest house, and helping in the Choir.

Recently, we have had many long term visitors and new members join us: Hierodeacon Philip is visiting and helping out with the Seminary Music program. We had two more novices, Gabriel and Silouan, who are greatly appreciated and providing much needed help. Basil, our maintenance man, continues to work long hours, constantly providing much needed improvements in and around the Monastery. Hesychos, one of the extended members of our community, has been coming up for

Seminary board meetings and to help ready us for the holidays. Jesse has also been visiting us, discerning his vocation and helping tremendously in the candle shop, bookstore, and Church. Add to this the large number of guests who have responded to our invitation to come for a retreat and to stay in our new guest quarters (of which we have several rooms for both men and women.) Unfortunately, due to the instability that was present here in the recent past, we lost one of our members, Fr. Gregory, who will be greatly missed as he continues on to another monastery.



On October 17<sup>th</sup>, we began excavating for our new modular home which was dropped off on November 6<sup>th</sup> and will be completed by December 7<sup>th</sup> (God willing.) This new building initiates a new phase in St. Tikhon's Monastery, one which will enable some of us to live in a healthy house (we were informed by a builder who inspected our current house that it is unsafe) and provide us with much needed room for growth. This project, the importance of which cannot be adequately explained, was only made possible by the Monastery benefactors like you. All are welcome to attend the House blessing service on December 19<sup>th</sup> after Liturgy. With

the exception of the paying for the mailing, 100% of the money donated for this project went for to pay for the house. The total cost of \$178,000 was given largely by the following four individuals: Irene and George Gianopolous, who graciously donated \$100,000, and Paul Koronchik and Mary Romanchak who donated \$30,000. We also received \$22,000 from individual donations ranging from \$5.00 to \$1,000. We thank you all so much for supporting this essential project for the Monastery.

Our bookstore continues to bring back into print many titles that were out of stock and is diligently working to publish new works and bring many more back into print. We are working on acquiring some grants to help us in this important work. Also, recently the Bookstore had a fall concert where many community members (some of whom are professional musicians) performed. Our next concert will be on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. It is free, open to the general public and all are welcome. Our new catalog for the Bookstore is available on-line at the monastery's website: [stikhonsmonastery.org](http://stikhonsmonastery.org), along with our recent financial statements, history about the monastery, a new video about our icon repository and museum, maps, icons, music and much more! Please visit us today.



Our Parish community continues to grow and have its Church school (run by Matushka Tamara Cowan and Kristen Smith) and also our adult education classes led by our newly appointed Parish Community Assistant, the retired V. Reverend Stephen Kopestansky. Both he and Matushka Alexandra provide greatly appreciated and invaluable help to the Monastery, Seminary, and Diocesan Center. Both the Monastery and Parish Community continue to grow and are readying for the official installation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Abbot St. Tikhon's Monastery on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010. We invite you all and hope that you can come to be with us on this historic day for our Monastery. Metropolitan Jonah, Archbishop Job, Bishop Tikhon, and many special guests from other monasteries, visiting clergy, family and friends are joining us for this special event which starts at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. Also, the Kursk Root Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos will bless us with Her presence on that holy day. It will be followed by a luncheon which everyone is invited to attend in the soon to be newly renovated Monastery Dining Hall which was paid for by our Parishioner and Dn. Michael Pasonick who continues to show his great love and devotion to the Lord and His Monastery and Seminary. We are deeply grateful for the tireless labors and contributions of Dn. Michael and Arlene Pasonick for both the Seminary and Monastery.

Finally, a special thanks to all of our community members, both far and near, the monastics, and the local and nationwide clergy who help us and support us. May God bless you all during this Nativity and Winter season and may the True and Never-waning Light of Christ our God shine brightly in your hearts now and forever, world without end.

With great love in the Lord,  
St. Tikon's Monastery Brotherhood