



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

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GREAT LENT

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Metropolitan Constantine, Patriarch Pavle, Metropolitan Theodosius, Bishop Robert, Father Peter Natishan, Father Gerald Olszewski, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Dragan Filipović, Father Elias Katras, Father Stevo Rocknage, Father Paul Stoll, Father Igor Soroka, Father Michael Mihalick [MS], Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Charles Mezzomo, Father Anthony Dimitri, Ollie Pendylshok, Walt & Evelyn Burlack, Joshua Agosto and his family, Harley Katarina Rahuba, Mike and Hilda Holupka, Eva Malesnick, Helen Likar, Stella Peanoske, Joe Nezolyk, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Virginia Bryan, Joseph Sliwinsky, Maria Balo, Linda Mechtly, Mary Mochnick, Mildred Manolovich, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Glen Lucas Burlack, Bernie Vangrin, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Andrea, & Melissa [Betty O'Masta's relatives], Mary Evelyn King, Stella Cherepko, Sam Wadrose, Cameron [a boy in Matt's class], Faith—a 7-year-old girl with rheumatoid arthritis, Isabella Olivia Lindgren—a 3-year-old with a brain tumor, Dillon, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Nick Malec [Maxine's brother], Erin, Jim Markovich, Jeff Walewski [thyroid cancer], Carol [Lotinski] Rose, Michael Miller, Dave May, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Alverta, Gary Zurasky, Michael Horvath, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Michael Miller, Jim Logue—throat cancer, Liz Stumpf, Ester Tylavsky, Ed Jamison, Theodore Nixon, Charles Johnson, Amy Forbeck, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Gloria Prymak [Liz's niece], Robert Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, John Sheliga, Sabrina, George & Mika Rocknage, Elizabeth Mitchell, Robert McKivitz, Marjorie Pershing, Tom Marriott, Joe Farkas, Liz Obradovich, Liz, Halyna Zelinska [Bishop Daniel's mother], Mary Ann, Charlotte, Peter Natishan, Michael Spak, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Brandi Thomas, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Ben Bonifield—a classmate of Alex, Peter Special, Amy Boe, Doris Artman, Maureen Sams, Nancy Barylak, Shirley Tkacik, Carol Kowalcheck, Martin Golofski, Joe Paouncic, Anthony Yerace, Joan Hyatt, and Daria Masur. **ARNOLD:** Stefania

Lucci, Steve Sakal, Homer Paul Kline, and Steve Ostaffy. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

The Lord permits our sufferings in order that we might feel our weakness and strive more fervently towards the source of every good thing, our Creator, who gives everyone what is profitable. *St. John Maximovich*

Please remember David Weaver in Mosul, James John Logue George Senita, & John Kirkowski assigned to Iraq, Matthew Machak, Tonia Dec, Michael Repasky, and ALL American servicemen and women in the Middle East in your prayers. May God watch over them and all American servicemen and women—and bring them all home safely!

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR “BOXTOPS FOR EDUCATION” AND CAMPBELL’S SOUP LABELS TO CHURCH. There is a shoebox in the basement for Alex’s Sixth Grade and Matt’s Fourth Grade collections. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HELP! Love, ALEX AND MATT

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. If you have a question, please call Father Bob.

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 279-5640.

Schedule of Services

Sunday, March 22	OBEDNITZA	10:30 AM
	VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS	
	HOLY 40 MARTYRS OF SEBASTE, MARTYR URPASIANUS, RIGHTEOUS CAESARIUS-BROTHER OF SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, RIGHTEOUS TARASIOUS	
	ANNUAL MEETING	
	<i>Tone 7</i>	
	Hebrews 4:14-5:6	
	Mark 8:34-9:1	
	<i>Litany in Blessed Memory of Tillie Kuzman—Debbie & John Paouncic</i>	
	<i>Parastas in Blessed Memory of Frank & Helen Riznow—Riznow Family</i>	
Thursday, March 26	Ecumenical Service—Parkview Baptist Church	7:00 PM
	Father Bob speaker	
Sunday, March 29	Divine Liturgy	10:30 AM
	SAINT JOHN CLIMACUS—JOHN OF THE LADDER	
	MARTYR SABINAS OF EGYPT, MARTYR PAPAS OF LYCONIA, MARTYRS TROPHIMUS & THALUS OF LAODICEA, APOSTLE ARISTOBULUS OF THE 70-BISHOP OF BRITAIN, HIEROMARTYR ALEXANDER-POPE OF ROME, MARTYR JULIAN, SAINT SERAPION-ARCHBISHOP OF NOVHOROD, SAINT CHRISTODULUS-MONK & WONDERWORKER OF PATMOS, MARTYR ROMANUS AT PARIUM ON THE HELLESPONT	
	<i>Tone 8</i>	
	Hebrews 6:13-20	
	Mark 9:17-31	

Thursday, April 2

Ecumenical Service—Holy Ghost Orthodox Church 7:00 PM
Rev. Tom Holmes Speaker

Sunday, April 5

Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF EGYPT

VENERABLE-MARTYR NIKON-BISHOP & 200 DISIPLES IN SICILY, MARTYR PHILETAS-SENATOR & WIFE LIDIA,
SONS MACEDON & THEOPREPIUS, NOTARY CRONIDES, & CAPTAIN AMPHILOCIUS IN ILLYRIA, VENERABLE
NIKON THE ABBOT OF PERCHEVSKY LAVRA, MARTYR DOMETIUS OF PHRYGIA

Tone 1

Hebrews 9:11-14

Mark 10:32-45

*Litany in Blessed Memory of John Cherepko, Rose Lopushansky, Michael Brittan, & Frank Pendlyshok—Fr. Bob
Parastas in Blessed Memory of Martha Batch—Harry Batch & Family*

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 22 MARCH 2009

VENERATION OF THE LIFE-GIVING CROSS

**HOLY 40 MARTYRS OF SEBASTE, MARTYR URPASIANUS,
RIGHTEOUS CAESARIUS-BROTHER OF SAINT GREGORY THE
THEOLOGIAN, RIGHTEOUS TARASIUS**

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

TROPARION—TONE 1

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance.

Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians, over their adversaries;

And, by virtue of Thy cross, preserve Thy habitation.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and
unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 7

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of paradise;

It has been mysteriously quenched by the wood of the Cross!

The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished;

For Thou, O my Savior, didst come and cry to those in hell:

Enter again into Paradise.

INSTEAD OF “O HOLY GOD”

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify,

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify,

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify,

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

And Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify,

Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify.

PROKEIMENON—TONE 7

READER: Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!

PEOPLE: **Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

READER: The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!

PEOPLE: **Extol the Lord our God; worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

READER: Extol the Lord our God.

PEOPLE: **Worship at His footstool, for it is Holy!**

ALLELUIA VERSES

Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast gotten of old.

God is our King before the ages; He has worked salvation in the middle of the earth.

Solovoki's Prosphora

"Once, three merchants came to Solovki to take part in the church services. Afterward, priests offered them blessed bread from the Liturgy and Zosima invited them to stay for dinner. When they did not come to the refectory, Mark (by now the cellarer of the monastery) told Zosima that the merchants had left early, not wanting to take time for a meal. Suddenly, the monks heard a monastery dog barking and growling near the shore. Mark left the table to investigate. He found the dog trying to hold back the merchants with his teeth, while the merchants pelted it with rocks, and, he said, a strange ring of fire burned on the ground where the dog growled. Inside the circle of flames, Mark explained, lay blessed bread from the liturgy, cast off by the merchants but guarded by the holy flames. The flames would not go out until the monk had retrieved the blessed bread from the ground. The merchants, though Christian, simply did not understand the sanctity of the prosphora...This was a harbinger: Solovki's prosphora were to become famous for their miraculous powers,

and saved and cherished for generations." *From "Solovki: The Story of Russia Told Through Its Most Remarkable Islands" Roy R. Robson (Yale University Press, 2004)*

THIS GENERATION

During my first year of seminary at St. Basil's, Stamford, we had a course in Liturgical History. The professor, Rev. Doctor Scrinicosky, taught us that the Prokimenon of the Liturgy (the Psalm verses before the Epistle reading) gave the "theme" of the service. I was always amazed that the Prokimenon of the Wedding (Crowning) service was the following: *You, O Lord, shall keep us, and shall preserve us, from this generation, and forever. Save me, O Lord; for the godly man has failed; for truth is diminished from among the children of men. (Ps. 11:8 & 2.)* What does that verse have to do with a man and a woman getting married? It seemed so out of place, irrelevant to the marriage. (This Prokimenon is also used whenever the 5th Tone service is sung on Sunday, and on 9/22 March—the 40 Martyrs—and today, the 2nd Sunday of Lent.)

What is the "generation" of which the Psalm verse speaks? You've all heard parents griping about the foibles of the "younger generation"—how they are careless, irresponsible, materialistic, not serious. And younger people say that the older generation is behind the times and doesn't listen to what the young have to say. I think, however, that the generation spoken of here is what is elsewhere in the Bible called "this world." That is to say secular society whose values, ideas, and morals are in most cases opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of our holy Church.

The real problem is that in recent decades even believing Christians have bought into this secularism and its godless values. We accept putting aside religious practice when it conflicts with making more money or seeking pleasure, or creature comforts. We accept the world's views on divorce, contraception, alternate lifestyles. A number of government leaders can support abortion, assisted suicide, fetal stem-cell research and other evils, and yet still claim to be practicing Catholics! *Truth is diminished from among the children of men.* Our world is topsy-turvy! It was a different place when people of my age were kids.

It's a good thing at the beginning of a couple's new life in Marriage, that in this Prokimenon of the Crowning service we pray the Lord to preserve this new husband and wife from letting their marriage buy into this world and its twisted values. As they walk their first steps as a new creation in Christ, may the Lord who joined them in the holy Mystery keep their lives pure and unadulterated by the twisted ideas of this godless world!

--Archpriest Charles Mezzomo

It's all about PERSPECTIVE!

A lecturer when explaining stress management to an audience raised a glass of water and asked 'How heavy is this glass of water?'

Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500g.

The lecturer replied, 'The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it:

If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem.

If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm.

If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance.

In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes.'

He continued, 'And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, As the burden becomes increasingly heavy, We won't be able to carry on.'

'As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden.'

'So, before you return home tonight, put the burden of work down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, Let them down for a moment if you can.'

So, my friend, put down anything that may be a burden to you right now. Don't pick it up again until after you've rested a while.

Here are some great ways of dealing with the burdens of life:

- * Accept that some days you're the pigeon, and some days you're the statue.
- * **Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them.**
- * Always **wear** stuff that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.
- * Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be "Recalled" by their maker.
- * **If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.**
- * If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
- * It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to be kind to others.
- * Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you won't have a leg to stand on.
- * **Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.**
- * Since it's the early worm that gets eaten by the bird, sleep late.
- * The second mouse gets the cheese.

- * When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- * **Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.**
- * Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once.
- * We could learn a lot from crayons...some are sharp, some are pretty and some are dull. Some have weird names, and all are different colors, but they all have to live in the same box.
- * **A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.**

Have an awesome day and know that someone has thought about you today... I did.

REMINDER: We will hold our Annual Parish Meeting after the service today, including reports of the officers, pastor, and other important information to be shared. This is YOUR parish and we all need to work together to make it the best it can be—and also to do God's work—LITURGIA is the "work of the people" and not just the parish board and priest. Please contribute your ideas, enthusiasm, and prayers for the success of our Holy Ghost family! God Bless us all!



ORDER OF SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE
ARCHONS OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE IN AMERICA

The Wall Street Journal highlights 'Battle Over an Orthodox Christian Monastery Tests Turkey's Tolerance of Minorities'
3/11/2009

Kartmin, Turkey - Mor Gabriel, one of the world's oldest functioning Orthodox Christian monasteries in Turkey for more than 1600 years, is in jeopardy of losing more than half its property. Turkish surveyors and Muslim villagers, armed with old maps and aerial photographs, are redrawing property boundaries owned by the monastery and plan to designate their land as public forest.

Last summer, Turkish officials informed the monastery that approximately 100 acres of land, currently enclosed within a high wall was actually state-owned forestland, resulting in a loss of about 60 percent of its core property. Even the monastery wall was also declared illegal. This threat by the Turkish government is an ongoing signal of religious persecution and confiscation of property rights of non-Muslim minorities, which includes institutions owned by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The dispute over Mor Gabriel is being closely watched in the United States and abroad as it is now in the hands of a Turkish court. Bishop Timotheus Samuel Aktas is battling to keep the monastic lands and has mobilized support from foreign diplomats, clergy, and politicians. The European Union and several embassies in Ankara sent observers to a court hearing in February, and a Swedish diplomat attended this week's session.

The trial comes at a critical stage in Turkey's 22-year drive to join the EU since protection of minority rights is a condition for entry.

The historic monastery, viewed by Syriacs as a "second Jerusalem", was built in 397 A.D. and has seen invasions by Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, and Muslim armies. Three monks, fourteen nuns, a bishop, and thirty-five students reside and worship on the ancient grounds and preserve the Syriac liturgy in a chapel adorned with Byzantine mosaics.

The originally published article, which appears in The Wall Street Journal and reported by Andrew Higgins, can be read in its entirety below.

Defending the Faith

Battle Over a Christian Monastery Tests Turkey's Tolerance of Minorities

By Andrew Higgins, Wall Street Journal

Saturday, March 7, 2009

KARTMIN, TURKEY -- Christians have lived in these parts since the dawn of their faith. But they have had a rough couple of millennia, preyed on by Persian, Arab, Mongol, Kurdish and Turkish armies. Each group tramped through the rocky highlands that now comprise Turkey's southeastern border with Iraq and Syria.

The current menace is less bellicose but is deemed a threat nonetheless. A group of state land surveyors and Muslim villagers are intent on shrinking the boundaries of an ancient monastery by more than half. The monastery, called Mor Gabriel, is revered by the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Battling to hang on to the monastic lands, Bishop Timotheus Samuel Aktas is fortifying his defenses. He's hired two Turkish lawyers -- one Muslim, one Christian -- and mobilized support from foreign diplomats, clergy, and politicians.

Also giving a helping hand, says the bishop, is Saint Gabriel, a predecessor as abbot who died in the seventh century: "We still have four of his fingers." Locked away for safekeeping, the sacred digits are treasured as relics from the past -- and a hex on enemies in the present.

The outcome of the land dispute is now in the hands of a Turkish court. Seated below a bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, modern Turkey's secular founding father, a robed judge on Wednesday told the feuding parties that he would issue a ruling after he visits the disputed territory himself next month.

The trial comes at a critical stage in Turkey's 22-year drive to join the European Union. When it first came to power in 2002, the ruling AK party, led by observant Muslims, pushed to accelerate legal and other changes demanded by Europe for admittance into its largely Christian club. But much of the momentum has since slowed. France has made clear it doesn't want Turkey in the EU no matter what, while Turkey has seemed to have second thoughts.

A big obstacle is Turkey's continuing tensions with its ethnic minorities, notably the Kurds, who account for more than 15% of the population and are battling for greater autonomy. Also fraught, but more under the radar, is the situation confronting members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, one of the world's oldest and most beleaguered Christian communities. The group's fate is now seen as a test of Turkey's ability to accommodate groups at odds with "Turkishness," a legal concept of national identity that has at times been used to suppress minority groups.

The dispute over Mor Gabriel is being closely watched here and abroad. The EU and several embassies in Ankara sent observers to a court hearing in February, and a Swedish diplomat attended this week's session. Protection of minority rights is a condition for entry into the EU.

Founded in 397, Mor Gabriel is one of the world's oldest functioning monasteries. Viewed by Syriacs as a "second Jerusalem," it sits atop a hill overlooking now solidly Muslim lands. It has just three monks and 14 nuns. It also has 12,000 ancient corpses buried in a basement crypt.

The bishop's local flock numbers only 3,000. Mor Gabriel's influence, however, reaches far beyond its fortress-like walls, inspiring and binding a community of Christians scattered by persecution and emigration. There are hundreds of thousands more Syriac Christians across the frontier in Iraq and Syria and in Europe. They speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ.

"The monastery is all we have left," says Attiya Tunc, who left for Holland as a child and returned this February to find her family's village near here reduced to ruins and overrun with sheep, since most of the villagers abandoned it. Ms. Tunc says she came in response to telephone call from Bishop Aktas appealing to former residents to come back and show their support in the land battle.

Historical Claims

Turkish officials say they have no desire to uproot Christianity. They point to new roads and other services provided to small settlements of Syriac Christians who have returned in recent years from abroad.

Mustafa Yilmaz, the state's senior administrator in the area, says Turkey wants to clarify blurred property boundaries as part of a national land survey, something long demanded by the EU. He says the monastery could lose around 100 acres of land currently enclosed within a high wall, meaning a loss of about 60% of its core property. Some of that could be reclassified as a state-owned forest, with the rest claimed by the Treasury on the grounds that it's not being used as intended for farming or other purposes.

Mr. Yilmaz says none of this would affect the monastery's operations as the land targeted isn't being used by monks or nuns, and he notes that the court could yet side in part with the monastery. He says the government has no desire to hurt a monastery he describes as a "very special place" that, among other things, helps boost the region's economy by bringing in throngs of pilgrims and tourists.

Christian activists, says Mr. Yilmaz, have "blown up" a mundane muddle into a religious issue. "Look, everyone wants to have more land," he says.

Syriac Christians see a more sinister purpose. They say the Turkish state and Muslim villagers want to grab Christian land and force the non-Muslims to leave. "There is no place for Christians here" until Turkey changes in fundamental ways, says Ms. Tunc.

The dispute has spurred some Muslims in neighboring villages to launch complaints against the monastery. Mahmut Duz, a Muslim who lives near Mor Gabriel, lodged a protest last year to the state prosecutor in Midyat, a nearby town. Mr. Duz alleged that the bishop and his monks are "engaged in illegal religious and reactionary missionary activities."

Mr. Duz urged Turkish authorities to remember Mehmed the Conqueror, a 15th-century Ottoman ruler who routed Christian forces and conquered the city now called Istanbul for Islam. He said Turkish officials should recall a vow by the Conqueror to " 'cut off the head of anybody who cuts down even a branch from my forest.' " Bishops and priests, Mr. Duz told the prosecutor, can keep their heads, but "you must stop the occupation and plunder" of Muslim land by the monastery.

No one at the monastery has been prosecuted for the crimes alleged by Mr. Duz and other villagers. The monastery says these claims are ludicrous. It says it tutors 35 Syriac Christian school boys in Aramaic and religion but conducts no missionary activities.

Syriac Christians take an even longer view than Mr. Duz. They deride local Muslims as newcomers, saying Mor Gabriel was built two centuries before Islam was founded. "Mohammed did not exist. The Ottoman Empire did not exist. Turkey did not exist," says Issa Garis, the monastery's archdeacon.

A Long List of Raids

Syriac Christians have indeed been living -- and often suffering -- here for a very long time. Mor Gabriel's history is a "long list of raids, wars, droughts, famines, plagues and persecutions," says British scholar Andrew Palmer. "Time and again, they've had to start again from nothing."

In the eighth century, plague swept through the area and took the lives of many of Mor Gabriel's monks. Survivors dug up the body of Saint Gabriel, the monastery's seventh-century abbot, and propped him up in church to pray for help. The plague, according to tradition, passed.

When disease later ravaged a Christian center to the north, Saint Gabriel's right hand was cut off and sent there to help. One of the fingers was then removed and dispatched to avert another crisis elsewhere. The finger is now missing.

As Islam extended its reach, the monastery shut down repeatedly, but always reopened. It was attacked by Kurds, Turks and then Kurds again. In the 14th century, Mongol invaders seized the monastery and killed 40 monks and 400 other Christians hiding in a cave. Perhaps the biggest blow of all came in the modern era, when Turkey's slaughter of Christian Armenians during World War I led to massacres of Syriac Christians, too. The patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church later decamped to Syria.

Ms. Tunc, the woman now living in Holland, grew up with stories of massacred relatives. Her father "told us never to trust Turks or Kurds," and ordered her to master Dutch ways "because we could never go back."

Her family and many others left Turkey in the 1980s during a brutal conflict between Turkish soldiers and Kurdish guerrillas. Syriac Christians, viewed with suspicion by both sides, frequently got caught in the crossfire.

The exodus drained towns and villages of Christians, including Midyat, the town where the court is reviewing the land dispute. Midyat used to be almost entirely Christian but now has just 120 non-Muslim families out of a population of 60,000. The town has seven churches, but just one preacher.

Running a Tight Ship

As Christians fled, Bishop Aktas took charge of Mor Gabriel. He'd earlier studied in New York but found the U.S. too permissive. "I didn't like America. It is not for monks like me," he says.

By some accounts, he ran a very tight ship. Aydin Aslan, a student there from 1978 until 1983, says discipline was extremely strict, each day devoted to study and prayer. "It was like a prison," recalls Mr. Aslan, who emigrated to Belgium.

Alarmed by a spate of thefts and determined to keep Muslim neighbors from encroaching, Bishop Aktas started building a high wall around his land. When Muslims from the village of Kartmin planted crops and grazed livestock near a well on monastic property, monks and school boys filled the well with stones to keep them away.

Muslim resentment grew against the monastery, which was being bolstered thanks to funds from abroad. Following a drop-off in fighting between the Turkish military and Kurdish guerrillas after 2000, Syriac Christian émigrés seized on the relative calm. They poured money in to rebuild old churches, expand the monastery compound, and build summer homes.

A few decided to move back for good. Jacob Demir returned from Switzerland with his family to a new villa on the outskirts of Midyat. "They thought we would go to Europe and melt away," says Mr. Demir. Instead, he says, exile only made him more aware and assertive of his Syriac identity. (His older children are less enthusiastic: A daughter stayed behind in Europe and a son who came back to Turkey left when he discovered how low local salaries are.)

The return to Turkey of relatively prosperous Christians helped the economy and provided jobs in construction. But it also needled some Muslims, especially when returnees began to claim abandoned property occupied by Muslims.

Turmoil in neighboring Iraq added to the unease. After the 2003 U.S. invasion, hundreds of thousands of Syriac Christians in Iraq fled mainly to Syria and Jordan as security collapsed and Muslims turned on their neighbors. Iraq's most prominent Syriac Christian, Saddam Hussein's foreign minister Tariq Aziz, was arrested by the U.S. Acquitted this week in the first of three cases against him, he remains in jail on other charges relating to the massacre of Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s.

As uncertainty mounted about the future of the Syriac church, officials in Midyat were ordered to survey all land in their area not yet officially registered. Surveyors, armed with old maps and aerial photographs, began fanning out through villages trying to work out who owned what.

Last summer, officials informed the monastery that big chunks of territory it considered its own were actually state-owned forest land. The monastery wall was declared illegal. Surveyors also redrew village borders, expanding the territory of three Muslim villages with which the monastery had long feuded.

The monastery went to court to challenge the decisions. Three village chiefs filed a complaint against the monastery with the Midyat prosecutor. Bishop Aktas, they complained, had destroyed "an atmosphere of peace and tolerance" and should be investigated.

The monastery's emigre lobby swung into action. Late last year and again in January, Syriac activists organized street demonstrations in Sweden and Germany. Yilmaz Kerimo, a Syriac Christian member of the Swedish parliament, protested to Turkey's Ministry of Interior, demanding an end to "unlawful acts and brutalities" at odds with Turkey's desire to join the EU.

Ismail Erkal, the village head here in Kartmin, one of the three settlements involved in the dispute, blames Bishop Aktas for stirring tempers. "This bishop is a difficult person," says Mr. Erkal. Standing on the roof of his mud-and-brick house. Looking out towards the monastery, he points to swathes of monastic land which he says should belong to Kartmin. His village used to have a church but, with no Christians left, it is now a stable. Next door is a new mosque.

Mr. Erkel says Islam "does not allow oppression," and denies any plan to get the last Christians in the area to leave.

Bishop Aktas says the message is clear: "They want to make us all go away."

"Always ask for help from the Lord and the Mother of God. Know of a surety that if a person, from the depths of his soul, does not wish to commit a sin, hell itself will not harm him because he will have the help of God.

But, if he himself is inclined toward sin, if he engages in converse with evil thoughts, rather than cutting them off as he would a poisonous vermin, then the enemy will find passage into his heart and the Lord will allow sin to abide therein.

In the same way, because of high-mindedness, pride or the constant and malicious judging of his neighbor, a man is allowed to fall. For this reason, one must be alert and not provide a cozy place in one's thoughts or one's heart for any kind of vermin, so as not to be stung. Only by means of vigilance, the restraining of our outward senses (sight, hearing, touch), and the ceaseless calling upon the name of God--as much as lies within our power--it is possible to repulse all the enemy's sallies and to keep from falling into a grave sin. By means of the Name of Jesus Christ, we must destroy those sinful thoughts and feelings, begotten of our sin-damaged nature and of demonic intrigue, before they grow and take root.

There is no other way or means of cleansing oneself: *Watch, therefore, and pray always* (Luke 21:36) that you may be found worthy to escape all calamities and foes and their weapons which are fashioned from your own sinful nature. Be patient and labor, struggle, don't give a hand to the enemy, be faithful to the Lord, and He will not abandon you and will not let you be offended even if the whole world should rise up against you. "God is with us, know ye, O nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!"

Abbot Nikon + 1963 Letters to Spiritual Children

May we all have the prayers of the Holy Abbot Nikon who is surely in the presence of our Lord...Letters to Spiritual Children is a precious book that can be read again and again with great value each time.

Some thieves came one day to the dwelling of an old man and said to him, "We have come to take everything that is in your cell." He said to them, "My children, take what seems good to you." So they took what they found in the cell and went away. Now they forgot a purse which happened to be hanging in the cell. The old man picked it up and ran after them, calling out, "Wait! You forgot this." Filled with wonder at the old man's long suffering, they put back everything in its place in the cell and did penance, saying to one another, "Truly this is a man of God."

Farmers find monastery beneath Israeli soil

By Deb Krajnak

CNN

(CNN) -- After a group of Israeli farmers sought last year to expand their property in the hills near Jerusalem, they discovered an archeological gem beneath the dirt.



Modern Israeli farmers were first to unearth this temple from the fifth or sixth century.

A team led by Daniel Ein Mor barely had to scratch the surface before finding the remains of a Byzantine monastery, he told CNN on Wednesday.

"The excavation at Nes-Harim supplements our knowledge about the nature of the Christian-Byzantine settlement in the rural areas between the main cities in this part of the country during the Byzantine period," including Jerusalem, Mor said.

The church is believed to have been built in the late fifth or sixth century, and is decorated with "breathtakingly beautiful mosaics," according to a description from the **Israel** Antiquities Authority, which hired Mor.

He said studying coins and pottery pieces will help determine the church's age more accurately. Other monastic sites have been excavated in the region, which was part of the Byzantine Empire.

For Mor, who is studying for a master's degree at the Institute of Archeology in **Jerusalem**, the excavation was a great opportunity because he already had been surveying nearby cliffs to document Byzantine monastic settlements where residents were cave-dwellers, he told CNN.

"So for me, it was fascinating," he said, referring to the excavation. "It was very close to what I had been working on."

The excavation site, surrounded by oak trees and farming terraces, is near Moshav Nes-Harim, 5 miles (8 kilometers) west of Jerusalem.

The digging began in November and is being done in phases, Mor said.

"Prior to the excavation, we discerned unusually large quantities of pottery shards from the Byzantine period and thousands of mosaic tesserae" scattered on the ground, he said.

The digging has been shallow, he said -- reaching only about 7 feet (2 meters) deep. The highest preserved wall is only 4 feet (1.2 meters high). This is common, according to Mor, because over the centuries such monasteries have been plundered and their building stones reused.

The digging seems to mark the center of the site, which covers about 15 dunams, or four acres, along the slope of a spur that descends toward Nahal Dolev, according to Mor.

During the first few weeks, the team exposed the church's narthex, the broad entrance at the front of the church, whose floor is covered with colorful mosaics in geometric patterns, he said.

"Unfortunately, at the conclusion of the excavation this mosaic was defaced and almost completely destroyed by unknown vandals," Mor said.

In the second phase of digging, the team discovered the apse -- the curved area at the end of the church, behind the choir -- the nave, parts of an aisle and two rooms on the north and south. In the southern room, which has a mosaic floor decorated with concentric circles, the mosaics spell out a dedicatory inscription, Mor said.

It says, "O Lord God of Saint Theodorus, protect Antonius and Theodosia the illustres, Theophylactus and John the priest" and asks the Lord to remember Mary and John ... and have pity on Stephen."

The excavators also partly exposed a complex wine press, said Mor. Grapes grow well in the region, and it's likely the monks sold the wine.

After the church was no longer used for religious purposes, it was abandoned, then likely used for light industry by a non-Christian population, who removed many of the mosaics, and stones from the walls.. There are indications that stones were burned to extract lime, Mor said. He said a kiln was found near the church, and Muslim pottery has been found at the site.

The team has exposed only about one-third of the monastery, and there are discussions over whether to continue, Mor said.

"We are considering finishing and opening the site to the public, but don't know for sure," he said.

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ABC NETWORK TO AIR PASCHA: THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

NEW YORK – GOTElecom, the television ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, will premiere **Pascha: The Resurrection of Christ**, a program highlighting Orthodox Christian Pascha, or Easter. The program, produced for ABC television network, and sponsored by **FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism**, is scheduled to air on ABC affiliates across the country in mid to late April.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to portray our meaningful Holy Week and Resurrection Services to a nationwide audience," commented Nicholas J. Furriss, Senior Producer and Director of GOTElecom. "The program, videotaped at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity during Pascha last year, depicts our faith not only as beautiful and sacred, but also very relevant. GOTElecom is blessed to have the opportunity to provide ABC with this program."

This one-hour special will highlight Holy and Great Week focusing on the deeply moving and ancient services that recount the Gospel narrative leading to the Death and Resurrection of Christ, including the Burial of Christ and the Resurrection Service. The Service of Holy Friday includes a procession with the embroidered tapestry of Christ in the grave (the *Epitaphios*). The Resurrection Service on Saturday evening at midnight, the liturgical apex of the Orthodox Church year, is filled with awe-inspiring hymnology and rich visual symbolism. The climax of the Resurrection Service is a procession to the exterior of the Church, where, after proclaiming the Gospel of Resurrection, the faithful, led by Archbishop Demetrios of America, take up the joyous hymn "Christ is Risen!"

"Pascha: The Resurrection of Christ" has been coordinated with ABC by Marissa P. Costidis, Coordinator of the Department of Communications and Managing Director of GOTELECOM. The program was produced and directed by Mr. Furriss. Mrs. Costidis and Mr. Furriss have been working with the National Council of Churches in the USA (Communications Commission) and the [Interfaith Broadcasting Commission](#) (IBC), through which America's faith community provides television programming to the affiliates of the three major broadcast TV networks each year. Previously, "Epiphany: A Festival of Lights" was broadcast on NBC affiliates nationwide and enjoyed tremendous success.

Each network distributes IBC productions to all of its affiliates by satellite. Each local station may then choose to present the program in a time slot of its choice over a span of several-weeks.

As the air date approaches local station air dates and times will be made available on the website www.PaschaABC.goarch.org or <http://www.interfaithbroadcasting.com/program.aspx?PID=306> DVD copies of the program will be available for sale in late April (\$25, includes shipping). To pre-purchase please contact the Department of Communications at 212.774.0244 or email gotel@goarch.org

A word from the desert

One of the city's landowners once went into the patriarch's room and saw that he (John the Almsgiver, feast day Nov. 12/25) was only covered with a torn and worn quilt, so he sent him a quilt costing 36 nomismata and besought him earnestly to cover himself with that in memory, he said, of the giver. John took it and used it for one night because of the giver's insistence, but throughout the night he kept saying to himself, "Who shall say that humble John was lying under a coverlet costing 36 nomismata whilst Christ's brethren are pinched with cold? How many are there at this minute grinding their teeth because of the cold? How many have only a rough blanket half below and half above them so that they cannot stretch out their legs but lie shivering, rolled up like a ball of thread? How many would like to be filled with the outer leaves of the vegetables which are thrown away from my kitchen? How many would like to dip their bit of bread into the soup water which my cooks throw away? How many would like even to have a sniff at the wine which is poured out in my wine cellar? How many refugees are there at this hour in the city who have no lodging place but lie about in the marketplace, perhaps with the rain falling on them? How many are there who have not tasted oil for one month or even two? How many have no second garment either in summer or winter and so live in misery? And yet you, who

hope to obtain everlasting bliss, both drink wine and eat large fishes and spend your time in bed, and now in addition to all those evils you are being kept warm by a coverlet worth 36 nomismata... Blessed be God! You shall not cover humble John a second night! For it is right and acceptable to God that 144 of your brothers and masters should be covered rather than you, one miserable creature! For four rough blankets could be bought for one nomisma." Early on the following morning, therefore he sent it to be sold, but the man who had given it saw it and bought it for 36 nomismata and again brought it to the patriarch. But when he saw it put for sale again the next day he bought it once more and carried it to the patriarch and implored him to use it. When he had done this for the third time the saint said to him jokingly, "Let us see whether you or I will give up first!" For the man was exceedingly well to do, and the saint took pleasure in getting money out of him, and he used to say that if with the object of giving to the poor anybody were able, without ill will, to strip the rich right down to their shirts, he would not do wrong, more especially if they were heartless skinflints. For thereby he gets a two fold profit, firstly he saves their souls, and secondly he himself will gain no small reward therefrom.

Leontius of Neapolis Life of John the Almsgiver, 21

*St. John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria (610-619), commemorated 12/25 November—
icon and troparion at: <http://www.comeandseeicons.com/j/spe07.htm>*