



The Eagle

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FRIENDS OF ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY

c/o ST. PAISIUS ABBEY, P.O. BOX 130
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Dear friends of St. Innocent's Academy,

There are few greater joys for a teacher than to see that moment of comprehension in the lit up faces of his students as they "get it", but it is even more gratifying to see the lives of the students change - to see those precious glimpses of God's Providence carefully, almost imperceptibly nurturing a young soul towards becoming the sort of person He intends all of us to be.

Such "imperceptibles" are rarely visible on tests, exams, papers and the like. They become visible in the student's life - in his attitude, feelings, thinking and his actions. It is in this realm that both the true aim of education is achieved and the greatest miracles of God's grace are performed. While I have been teaching here at St. Innocent's Academy I have been blessed to see the boys slowly inch towards true manhood.

Yet one must not imagine that this all occurs smoothly, calmly, with no difficulties. Life in the Academy is intense and it is a struggle - often difficult, often painful. Those living here, both students and staff, not only have their own passions and demons to face within, but also the endless difficulties and temptations brought down upon us, en masse at times, from without. It is this very struggle that tills the ground of our hearts (and even our



minds!) and makes us more receptive to receive the grace that God sends.

Is it not this willingness to face and fight with evil that is the mark of manliness of soul? Is it not this resolve that is most lacking among Christians today? Is it not this firm orientation of will that Christ most cherishes in those who love Him? And is it not a miracle of God's grace that such places exist where the whole aim of life is geared to developing this inner strength?

It is. In biblical terms, this is simply the combination of loving God before all else and carrying one's cross, even if in such small ways and by such weak souls as we. It has been a blessing and even mysterious to participate in that work for which our Lord became incarnate and set us free, for we must never forget that ultimately it is God doing this work.

-Monk Nikodim

STREET MISSION: TALES OF THE ACADEMY CHOIR

By Matthew Sutton

We hit the road, singers for Christ, heading to a Thanksgiving service in one of Kodiak's churches. We were five Academy students, full of nervous energy and inspiration, led by Fr. Paisius in his weary Voyager wagon. As we entered the parking lot, much to our surprise, snow blew across the empty parking spaces and silence reigned around the dark church.

Unexpectedly, we were an hour early. We started back to the Academy and as we passed the lit up Wal-Mart, Josh joked, "Let's go sing there!"

Fr. Paisius met this jesting suggestion with prompt consent, at which sudden loud complaints about throats hurting were voiced from the back seat. However, we were all for it, and enthusiastic about the ideas of singing in a store besides. We were full of inspiration as we marched behind our black-robed Italian Dean into the world of Wal-Mart. Bright colors, worldly ads, customer

friendly music, relaxation and comfort greeted our eyes, ears, and souls as we walked forward like a football team behind their quarterback.

Each cashier wore a blue vest and stood at the end of her aisle, waiting for customers. When Fr. Paisius asked them if they would like us to sing, they dispersed like a flock of seagulls off the back of a diving whale. The red-vested manager came forward and said ambivalently that she guessed we could sing. So we lined up in the middle of the big aisle up front and sang “What Wondrous Love is This?” our voices arching to the rafters of the store. People shopping stopped in the aisles and watched and listened, their souls touched in a way that is not often experienced in modern society.

Next we went to Safeway, where Fr. Paisius asked the manager if we could sing a song. The manager said ambivalently “Sure!?!” not knowing what else to say. We lined up in a row, five of us, in front of all the cash registers where people were taking away their groceries. The atmosphere was thick, and dark with material anxiety and concerns. There were lots of people, and they didn’t know what to do when we began singing. Our song was a Shaker hymn from the Appalachian Mountains. The sound is very primitive, pure, and amazingly beautiful. Singing it, we were attempting to do more than just sing a song we had rehearsed; we were breaking through, to warm hearts for Christ. It was as if we were parting the curtains and letting a ray of light shoot through--then when we finished the waves closed over once again, and we left.

Then Fr. Paisius took us into McDonald’s, usually one of the thickest atmospheres to penetrate. We were expecting the worst of coldness, apathy, and sarcasm. We filed in the door and a friend who had done his community service hours with us ran up and greeted us with a big smile and told us it was his birthday. It was obviously God’s Providence to meet him there. We asked the manager if we could sing and she said, “Yes, most assuredly!” We did, and they loved it. Then we sang “Happy Birthday” to our friend and the manager gave us all hot chocolate. She asked us to continue singing and we did. It was the best reception we got!

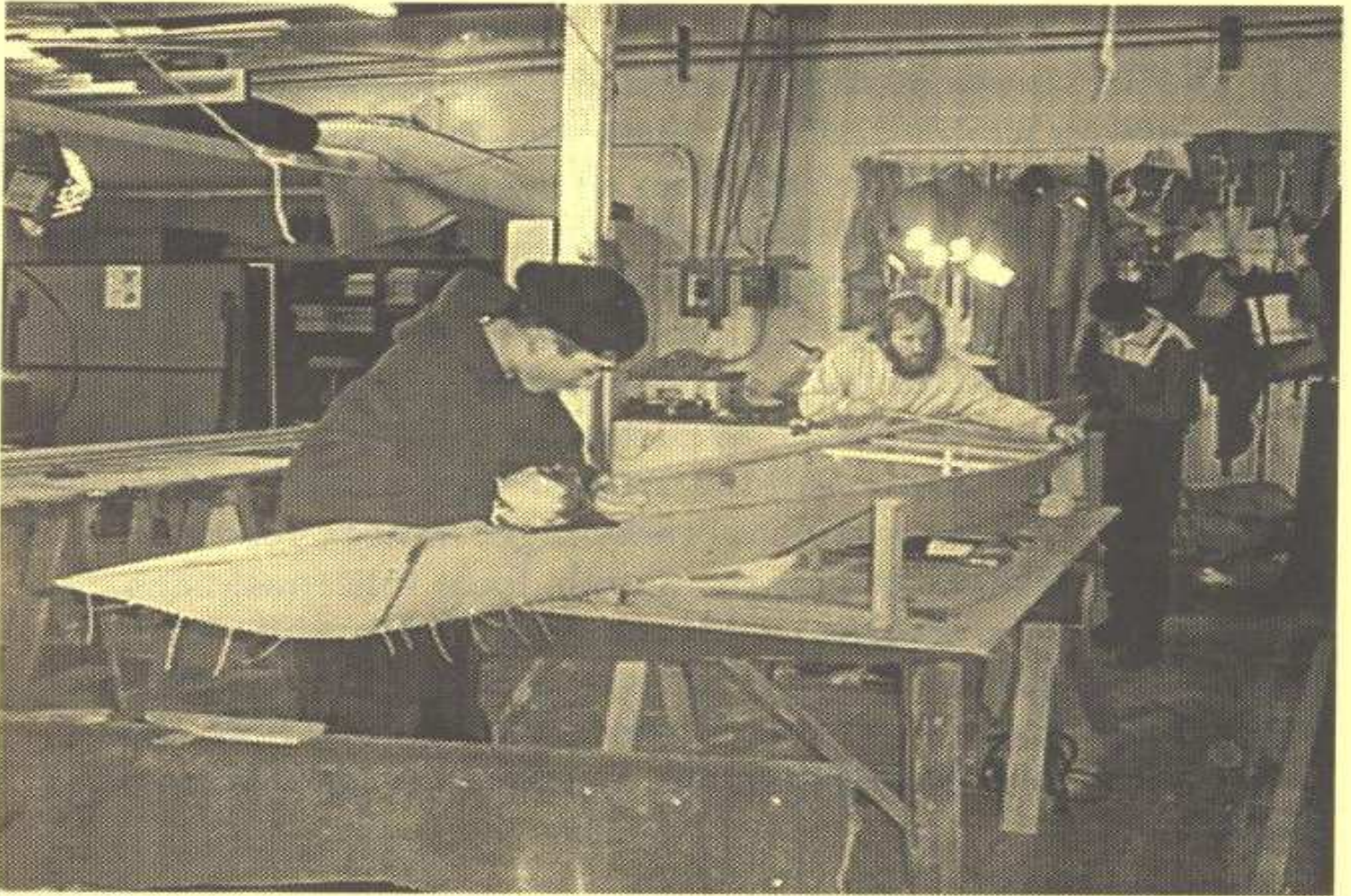
Returning to the church, we found our way to a pew and sat down. Many people from different churches in Kodiak were there; lots of children and young people. We sang their hymns with them and listened to the performers, and prayed. Finally it was our turn to sing and so we marched up there in our uniforms and made our row right in front of the pulpit. Sam introduced the song in a mighty voice, and we sang. It was a prayer to bring down the Holy Spirit upon all those in the church. Fr. Paisius had



The Academy choir in performance

told us to pray, after the first initial stage-sweat, and let Christ use our voices. The music soared across the people, into the corners of the room, and into hearts. People bent forward in their pews to listen, and it seemed to put a new tone in the room. There were many compliments to the men at the end and requests for more performances. There are openings in our newly forming choir for those willing to “sing a new song”.

The First Sea Kayak



The first kayak at mid-point of completion

Our very first kayak is near completion. It sits astride two wooden horses in our lower Academy shop awaiting the finishing touches. Many inspired and perspired moments attended its birth as Mr. Wood and a team of students labored over it. We will keep this first boat since it is the inaugural vessel of the Academy's own wooden boat production. The subsequent ones will be for sale. Kodiak has a large number of kayak enthusiasts. We are hoping for enthusiastic sales as well.

Attention Academy Friends!! Our Christmas Gift is coming to you in the U.S. Mail and will either already have arrived or will be there shortly after the Eagle. It is a small but significant piece of Alaska that we hope you will enjoy. Thanks for all your wonderful support this year!

MONK'S ROCK BOOKSTORE -Sr. Mary Butler

The shores of Alaska are ripe for adventure and creativity. The souls are simple and free. These two qualities have been a source of continual inspiration for our work at Monk's Rock. To provide spiritual and classical literature, along with a coffeehouse atmosphere, is a good part of our job. But more importantly, we find that providing a warm, inviting haven for seafaring fishermen, or Aleut natives to be our greatest ministry.

A host of events are available for nightly gatherings since we are open the latest of all the coffeehouses in town. Along with our weekly lectures, we have Friday night movies centered around a specific theme for the month, local folk musicians who come to play, the sharing of adventurous BEAR AND FISH TALES, as well as seasonal works of classical literature read out loud. With our dark and cold winter nights already here, these events allow people to gather and continue life by sharing their hearts.



With much help from the Academy, we have been able to transport our Bookstore to many fairs around town. The most inspiring aspect of this has been that we are able to meet many new people who would not necessarily come in the store. It has allowed us to make important connections with the community otherwise not made. A project that is still in the infant stages is our bush mailer, Baidarka. With so many remote villages around Alaska, there is a great need for contact by mail. These villages have many Orthodox people who may never be able to come to Kodiak to see Monk's Rock. So, we are bringing the store to them by mailing a simple brochure telling of items available, along with inspiring quotes from Holy Fathers or Saints of Alaska.

LIFE AT THE MISSION

Our working and living relationship with the Baptist Mission has been going very well so far. We work as the maintenance crew in return for the rent of one of their large buildings which temporarily houses the Academy. Boilers seem to be the main issue here. They are constantly needing mending. Our men are learning lots of lifetime skills in the maintenance areas, including auto-mechanics, carpentry, plumbing and other related things. Anything from backhoe operating to our current favorite, snowplowing, can be seen daily in practice on the mission grounds.

One area here that is also a favorite is the horse care and riding. There is a horse named Toyon (native for leader) He is 37 years old, quite old by horse standards. Many Kodiakans remember learning to ride on this small but solid quarter horse. He recently had a severe crisis in that he could no longer digest properly. It was declared that by five o' clock on that very night he would be "put-down" as an act of mercy. Our men began digging his grave but our little girls in the community went to work around the horse praying for him and singing the Akathist to the Mother of God. Lo and behold something

was beginning to move and at 5 o' clock they declared that the horse could continue to live and so far he is doing fine! Glory be to our God!

– Justin Wood

A Wish List

- * Beeswax candles and tapers
- * Soft-cover Thesaurus and Dictionaries
- * Good map of the world
- * Maps of old /new testament times for class
- * Socket Set metric and/or standard measurement
- * Dried Fruit and Nuts etc.
- * Wrench set metric and/or standard
- * Flat bed color scanner
- * Small circular trim saw
- * Good jigsaw
- * Wood carving set
- * Jorgensen clamps
- * Lathe tools
- * Slide Projector w/carousels