



The Eagle

MAR.-APRIL, 2000

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FRIENDS OF ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY

c/o ST. PAISIUS ABBEY, P.O. BOX 130
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ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY, P.O. Box 1517, Kodiak, AK 99615

Lenten Season 2000

Dear Friends of St. Innocent's Academy,

In this season our young men are discovering prayer and fasting first hand and are adding to it the almsgiving of service. The very word service, giving of oneself for the good of others, seems to focus and brace the scattered and dissipated energies of modern youth. It seems to call to the sleeping giant of the will, to awaken and come forth! And to do what is good and right in a troubled and dark society.

During this time of Lent we are given the opportunity through fasting and prayer to take stock of our inner situation and begin the necessary "spring cleaning."

What turns up oftentimes is not a pretty sight. When it all begins to show, a person's first inclination is anger and resentment towards others and an ultimate blaming of God and then a powerful impulse to run and hide. This culminates in an overall feeling of despair.

Jesus came to the father who had begged the disciples to cure his "lunatic" son. The boy remained unaffected by their word

and prayers. Our Lord rebuked the spirit and it immediately departed. The astonished disciples, upon asking, "why?", were given this answer: "Because of your unbelief.... If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place and it shall remove and nothing shall be impossible to you. Howbeit **this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**

Our young men are being called to serve Kodiak more and more as will be seen in this and the upcoming issues of the Eagle. This opportunity to serve is a blessing and antidote to the nagging despair of modern times. It becomes for us the "grain of mustard seed" which orders mountains to move and lo, "Nothing shall be impossible to you."

Thank you for your support and prayers for us as we continue to "keep the lampada lit" for all of you in the land of Saint Herman and Saint Innocent.

A Museum Piece

A part of Kodiak's rich Russian Orthodox heritage was introduced to us recently through an Academy friend named Teacon Simeonoff, a young man from the distant village of Akhiok. He has been studying for many years to become an 'elder' among his people, learning oral traditions deeply steeped in Holy Orthodoxy and passed down through generations of Alutiq people.

The Alutiq Museum in Kodiak had called the Academy to ask if the young men could make a "star" of the type used in Nativity processions in the Kodiak archipelago. A friend referred us to Teacon, who is known throughout the islands as a fine maker of stars. He agreed to work with Joshua Mead from the Academy,



Artwork by, Sean Brester
Student, Port Lions, AK

and together they constructed the frame, then decorating it with the help of Academy students. The physical construction is but a small part in the making of a star, however, because there is an extensive oral tradition on the symbolism and meaning of the star, and this had to be learned, an undertaking of several days.

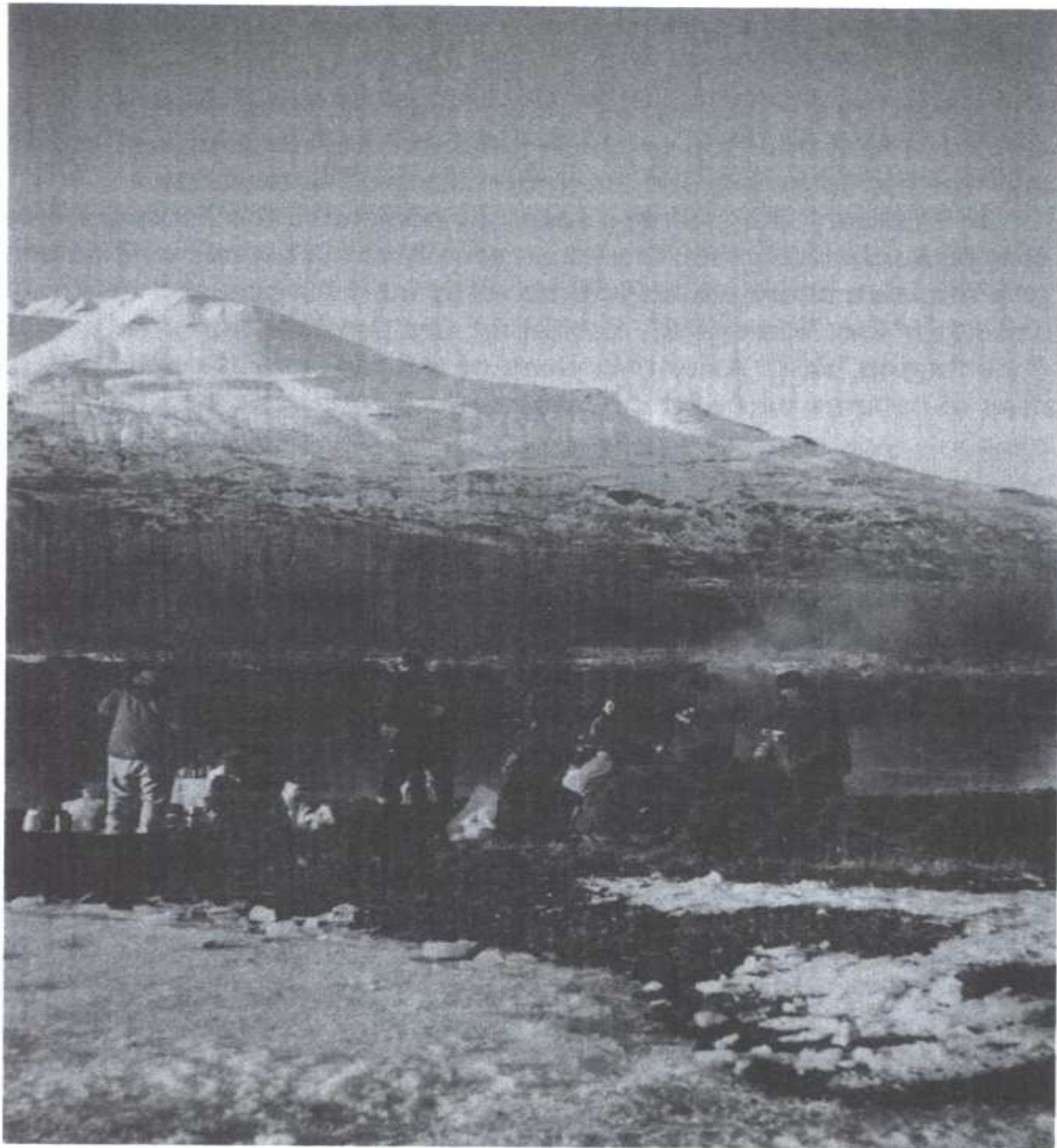
In February the star was ready to present to the Museum, and was taken there by the Academy (see photo). The star will be part of a museum show which will travel around Alaska, and visit museums in the 'lower 48', including the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. After two years of touring, it will return to Kodiak to become part of the permanent collection.



Some Academy students and staff present the new Star to the Alutiiq Museum

A Picnic in February

President's Day dawned bright, sunny, and cool this February 21st. Fr. Paisius decided that an outing was in order, so after breakfast and an inspiring talk on how our young men can be a new wave of witness for Christ and the wisdom for living found



The reading of the life of Maria of Olonets at dinner

in Holy Orthodoxy, preparations for the trip were begun. At 2:30 the caravan formed up and we were off to Middle Bay. We drove out the Chiniak Road, bumping over the potholes on the dirt road, breathtaking scenery appearing at every turn and twist. Ranges of snow covered mountains, trees full of perching eagles, and the

silvery waters of the vast tidal bays and flats greeted our eyes.

Near Middle Bay we turned off onto a little access road that had once led to a cattle farm, now deserted. (Cattle raising never did too well on Kodiak because the bears came and ate the cows, so now most cattle are raised on the outer islands where there are no bears.) This beautiful valley has a fine stream called the American River, and is surrounded by tall snowy mountains. Just 150 yards upstream from our parking area Mr. Wood found a pool in the stream, full of eighteen inch long Dolly Varden. Children, adults and dogs waded and hiked in the warm 40 degree sun.

Wood was unloaded from the pickup, and a fire started on the black shale beach. Isaiah Pousson had made a spicy Cajun barbecue sauce, while Anthony May had concocted a fresh garlic and spice marinade. Once the fire was well started, deer steaks, deer ribs, hotdogs, sausage, and red salmon were grilled by our two cooks. The food was delicious!

It was the repose day of a blessed wilderness dweller, Maria of Olonets, and Fr. Paisius read from her life during dinner. The reading was very poignant, and even the smallest children listened attentively. As he finished, the sun was setting, flooding the peaks of the surrounding mountains with golden alpenglow. The sky turned rose, and the cold breath of the mountains flowed down on our party. The fire was enlarged, guitars appeared, and singing began. Brownies and hot cocoa were warmly greeted. Fr. Paisius led the group in folk and Irish songs until at last at 7:30 we reluctantly climbed into our vehicles and began the hour-long trip home.

Travels to Akhiok

— by Joshua Mead

Recently I was blessed with the opportunity to represent the Academy in a native village. Alutiq culture week was being held in the village of Akhiok, off the southwestern tip of Kodiak Island. Teacon Simeonoff had invited me because we had become

friends while working on a “star” used in Russian Orthodox processions for Nativity house blessings and singing. It seemed a good opportunity to bring some of the treasures of spiritual writing and iconography to the Alutiq people, who gained Orthodoxy from the saints of Russian Alaska more than 200 years ago.

I flew down on Monday morning with a large box of icons, books, and CDs . When I got to Akhiok there were about six 4-wheelers there to greet the plane at the end of the little gravel runway. We drove through the town up to the school, past dozens of eagles lined up on the ridgepoles.

I left my sleeping bag and boxes at the school woodshop, and then went to tell one of the village elders about all the books and icons I had brought. I was crushed when she turned to me and said that I couldn't get them out because there was to be no evangelizing in the village. I just dragged my way through the evening, and when I got up the next morning I called Fr. Paisius with a voice laden with despair. He encouraged me to be imaginative and not to give up so easily.

I went back in, resolved to share my enthusiasm for Orthodoxy or get thrown out in the attempt. God provided lots of opportunities. I was sitting reading and noticed that the kitchen crew were listening to Metallica, a heavy metal rock band. So I went into the kitchen and asked them if they would like me to read to them from St. Innocent's writings instead. One was enthusiastic, and the rest couldn't think of any reason to say no, so I read two chapters aloud. The tone of the room was soon changed.

Now my imagination was flowing! I went into the high school room, where the students were sitting around completely bored while asking each other trivia questions from a set of flash cards. I started throwing in questions like “What was the name of St. Herman's helper?” I got a good response when I asked if anyone could remember the Paschal hymn. I also joined a class on making a native Koniag hat and participated in other activities.

On Wednesday the local church reader, asked to see what I had brought. I opened the boxes in the entry to the gym where everyone was eating lunch, and soon I was buried as a swarm of people examined the crosses and dug through the box of books. The desire for these items was evident as by the time I left almost everything in the boxes was sold.



Joshua Mead models his Koniag hat, made by him at the Akhiok workshop

Alutiq week was dedicated to village elder Phyllis Peterson. I had gone to see her early in the week when I was feeling so discouraged, and her face had lit up when I said that I was there to remind people that Lent was coming. The people of Akhiok take Lent very seriously. Children are not allowed to shout and there is no partying, for example. On Thursday, Phyllis spoke in the gym to all the villagers and especially to the young people about respecting Lent and keeping it. She was weeping from the intensity

of her feelings about the tradition. Her talk moved someone to place an icon of the Mother of God above the gym doors.

At the end of the week I had gotten to know the villagers of Akhiok and learned something about their traditions. At the Academy, my experiences have been a springboard for the young men who have had all sorts of ideas and plans including taking a bookstore traveling to Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. Our goal is to help distribute the rich heritage of Orthodox literature and icons to the faithful in distant corners of Alaska. We, in turn, hope to learn more from the inheritors of St. Herman and St. Innocent.

Wish List:

Gold colored material for making acolyte robes
Hobart 22 qt. mixer, preferably with stainless steel
(not galvanized) bowl
Soccer balls and shin guards
Sleeping pads for Camping
Palm sanders, belt sanders
Large hp outboard motors (and an outboard mechanic
instructor)
Cordless drill
Jigsaw and blades
Books on Electronics and electronic breadboards

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If you would like to receive the 'Academy Visitor's Guide', show the new Academy video, or provide an item on the wish list, please contact Alan and Donna Jones at the above address or phone them at (907) 486-2529, e-mail alandonnaj@aol.com.