



# The Eagle

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FRIENDS OF ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY

P.O. BOX 1928, KODIAK, AK 99615

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ST. INNOCENT'S ACADEMY, P.O. Box 1517, Kodiak, AK 99615

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*THE PURE, the bright, the beautiful,  
That stirs our hearts in youth,  
The impulse to a wordless prayer,  
The dreams of love and truth,  
The longings after something lost,  
The spirit's yearning cry,  
The strivings after better hopes,  
These things can never die.*

At the end of this millennial year which has rapidly flown by, and now almost halfway through our third year of existence, we find ourselves entering a new and inspiring phase of our growth: the first stirrings of a God inspired, Christ illumined academic curriculum. It is a topic that is always in our hearts and minds, but because of the tremendous effort to plant ourselves firmly and build the physical Academy we have been relying on external accredited curricula and enriching them with our own classes. The time is coming soon to implement a classical high school curriculum, where *souls* are taught, rather than subjects. I will be sharing more of our thoughts and progress with this in future editions of the Eagle.

As enrichment classes, we have taken up the teaching of

Latin (by unanimous popular demand!) as well as History, Philosophy, Theology, English Literature and Writing, and Music (Choir, Irish Band and Music Appreciation). Through the teaching of these subjects, along with sports, outdoor survival instruction, search and rescue, boating and seamanship, hunting, fishing, and manual labor and craft of many types, a young man's heart, however closed and dark, can be reached and instilled with warmth. This, coupled with a life of striving after holiness, and proper discipline in a warm and lively Christian home, completes the basic framework of Academy life, where indulgence in the selfish attitude of modern times changes to a life lived in sacrificial love for the sake of others, and ends in finding our heart in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This year has brought much growth, not without tribulation. The Academy is just beginning to manifest the first glimmers of a fuller potential. By the Grace of God and your prayers we continue to grow towards maturity. Through this letter, I cannot adequately thank you all for your support which touches our hearts when we receive everything from financial support to an envelope with autumn leaves, carefully picked and sent with love. We pray for you from the land of Saint Herman and Saint Innocent.

With Love in Our Lord Jesus, your servants,  
Fr. Paisius, family and staff

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*THE FOLLOWING LETTER was written in reply to a request for information about the Academy by a teacher in the Midwest.*

Dear M-,

Greetings from Alaska!

Thank you for your inquiry. The Academy could actually be considered a mix of youth programs welded into a whole as an Orthodox Christian family community. There are three main pillars of endeavor: academics, work experience, and development of the soul using traditional Orthodox means.

On the academic side, we have some students doing high

school work and some doing college work.

High school studies currently most often utilize the Kodiak High School Area Wide Curriculum. (In Alaska, so many stu-



*Work time, on a combine harvesting potatoes*

dents are far from any school that the local schools actually have their own home schooling curriculum. 80% of Alaska communities are off-road, i.e. not connected by a road to anywhere else.) We have some students using other home schooling curricula as chosen by their parents. Lastly, it is also possible for stu-

dents to actually attend the public high school here, although in practice we find that most students only do so partially for certain classes or activities.

College work is done through Kodiak College, CLEP tests, GREs, distance learning, etc.

All students are asked to attend classes taught at the Academy in English, writing, and literature, taught by a local college instructor. Modular instruction for periods of weeks to semesters is also offered, and we have had a variety as wide as navigation, basic electricity, the literary works of G. K. Chesterton, and the Orthodox worldview based on the Nicene Creed.



*The gleaning crew (including kids) gathers up potatoes missed by the machine*

Another aspect of instruction is at meals there is a reading, usually from the Holy Fathers, the *Prologue*, saints' lives, or

sometimes classical literature. While this may not seem “academic,” in reality listening to challenging texts forces everyone to think, to learn vocabulary, and to read aloud. It is amazing how much this improves all sorts of academic skills! Fr. Paisius is always aware of how the young men are responding (or not) to readings, and stops to question comprehension, discuss difficult points, and encourage students to make connections of the materials with their own lives. Trapeza readings of this type are a traditional practice in monasteries, and it is interesting to see the wisdom of this practice in action.

In like manner, the reading of the church services also serves multiple purposes. We try to do as many of the services in the whole cycle of daily services (the Horologion) as possible. There is nothing more important than the steeping of the whole person in the Presence of God. As a side benefit, there is also the fact that the services are based on the Bible and the psalms, include the whole teaching cycle of the church, contain sublime poetry and singing, and, again, contribute to increasing comprehension and reading skills as the young men take turns being the reader. We thus also train up church readers who know the services.

Work is the second big component of our program. In addition to all sorts of household chores, all the young men learn various skills through hands-on experience. Construction, remodeling, maintenance, small engines (lawnmowers), car repair, taking care of horses, fishing, boat handling, etc. are all probabilities. Some young men want to learn a particular skill like diesel mechanics, so we will try to find a person for them to learn from and perhaps work with. Some of the older men work part-time jobs to pay for their tuition.

The third component, living the Christian life, also includes outreach and missionary activities that range from regular visits to the nursing home, to helping people in the community who ask, to reaching out to troubled Kodiak young people. Keeping a spiritual journal, following the fasts and feasts of the church, the discipline of prayer, and looking at all aspects of their lives to see if they are really living a God pleasing life all encourage real growth.

Classical music, opera, classic movies and books support basic growth in the soul, which has been neglected in many modern

upbringings. The beauty of Alaska's land and water, and the opportunities to test themselves in its wilderness (with appropriate training) also contribute much.

On the NOT list, we include no TV, radio, rock, rap, no drugs, smoking, drinking, no skateboards, video games, no profane images on clothing. This makes for some rocky beginnings for some kids as they detoxify from the world, but they get a lot of support, attention and love from staff and students alike. We have all had to give up favorite pieces of excessive worldliness!

What I am not adequately conveying in all this is the lively spirit of the Academy. There is a wonderful freshness in the spon-



*Birthday party excitement*

taneity of some of our days. Fr. Paisius knows when to pull in the reins and when to loosen them. I don't know how to explain it exactly except to say there is a sense that all sorts of things are possible, from an hour's notice that someone is going to take a boat ride to Monk's Lagoon to an urgent appeal from someone to move a boat, catch a loose horse, sing at the teen center, or do an impromptu send off concert on the dock for

someone departing on the ferry!

Well, I have covered a lot of ground here, and you may have some more specific questions, so please let me know what you would like to know.

In Christ,  
Donna Jones

## *An Encounter With a Russian "Baba"*

— by Mara McLeester

Being raised in the modern American society, I have never really wanted to picture myself as an old person. Although I have always respected my elders for their experience and wisdom, I have never felt the desire to grow old. Recently I met a person who changed this opinion of mine. Natalia Olgiati is a great-grandmother who was raised in the Old Russian culture. When the Revolution began, her family fled to China, where they knew Archbishop John Maximovitch.\* Later her family moved to Argentina, and finally she moved to California. I was able to visit and have a long talk with her, and she told me many stories of her life.

"I first met Archbishop John in China, Shanghai. May God forgive me! When I couldn't hear him — the way he was talking — I thought, 'What kind of bishop is this?' [Archbishop John had a speech impediment - *Ed.*] I was accustomed to those pompous bishops. I went very few times while I was there. Later, when I was in Argentina, I got sick, I got tuberculosis. I wrote to my sister (who was living in California at the same time that Archbishop John was there) and I was all ready to go. So I wrote a letter saying good-bye. I was never afraid of dying — to me, it was natural. So my sister ran to Bishop John for him to pray for my recovery. The Bishop said, 'We're not going to ask for her recovery, we will just say, "Thy will be done."'"

And here am I! That was fifty years ago! It turns your whole soul to know that by his prayers you are alive."

Having a love for sewing, as well as being an opera fanatic (she and her sisters learned Italian just so that they could understand the opera, and when the famous tenor Gigli visited Argentina, she went to all of his concerts), Baba ("Grandma" in Russian) and I hit it off immediately.

Mrs. Olgiati's life has been full of hardships as well as happiness. She has spent most of her life helping other people, and

even now she spends all her time serving others. She made two beautiful sets of analogion covers for the St. Innocent's Academy's chapel, for example. She has been steeped in the Old Russian culture and has obtained a wonderful mixture of wisdom and humility. Simply through knowing her, I have developed a great love for the zeal and the holiness of a generation that is quickly being forgotten by our society. I am very thankful that I was able to meet one of the last links to Orthodox Russia.

*\* Ed. Note: Archbishop John Maximovitch (+1966) was Archbishop of San Francisco. Single minded in his devotion to God and a true pastor to his flock, he is known for his humility, his sanctity, and his miraculous healings, both before and after his death. Canonized a saint, his incorrupt remains lie in his home cathedral, Joy of All Who Sorrow, in San Francisco.*

Mara spent the summer in Kodiak at St. Sophia's House, singing opera and working with the Academy. Upon her return home, she visited Mrs. Olgiati, one of the Academy's benefactors and spiritual friends, in California.



*Mara and Beth McLeester visiting Madame Natalia Olgiati.*

### Wish List

- Laser Printer (used is fine)
- Pull down maps, such as a school should have
- Black jeans, black slacks, socks
- Sea and/or surf kayaks
- Used books for the Pushkin Literary Society

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Our new website is at <http://www.ptialaska.net/~innocent>.

### An Academy Credo

“Today’s youth need to base their values on time-tested Christian values. Our post-Christian society inculcates in the mind of youth, rebellion, narcissism, sensuality, utter selfishness, and a lack of discipline.

“We at the Academy are working to train souls in the way of virtue, inculcating in them respect, self control, discipline, self-sacrifice, love of labor, and a world view that ennobles their souls, preparing them for manhood and fatherhood; preparing them to be loving, dedicated husbands, while preparing their souls for the Kingdom of Heaven.”

—Hieromonk Damascene (Christensen)  
Visiting Instructor, St. Innocent's Academy