

# The Forerunner

[www.saintjohnnewken.org](http://www.saintjohnnewken.org)

Vol 58, Nos. 6 & 7 - June / July 2015

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HE MUST INCREASE.....AND I MUST DECREASE. (JOHN 3:30)

## **St. Jacob (Netsvetov) Enlightener of Alaska**

**By: Bev Cooke**

If you look at a map of Alaska, you'll see it has a kind of tail leading away from the mainland toward Russia and Japan. That tail is made up of a large peninsula and hundreds of islands, some reasonably large, others nothing more than a small bare rock. Those are the Aleutian Islands. And if you look northwest a few hundred miles of that very long peninsula, you'll see a small island. That's St. George Island, and in 1802, a saint was born there to an Aleut woman named Maria Alekseevna and her husband, a Russian Siberian named Yegor Vasil'evich Netsvetov. Their son was the eldest of four children. By all accounts, the family was close, with the parents doing all they could to ensure their children were happy and healthy. The children were raised in a community that had been around for over eighty years, and had a lot of exposure to the Russian fur traders who came around every hunting season to buy the seal pelts. That's probably how Yegor met Maria. The village was a combination of Aleut and Russian, with traditions and language from both cultures.

The family wasn't rich, but they managed to save enough to give all the boys an education. Jacob, the eldest, chose to go into the church and so moved to Irkutsk to attend the seminary. His brothers Osip (Joseph) and Antony decided to attend the naval

academy in St. Petersburg. In those early days, Alaska wasn't yet a part of the United States, and there weren't many schools established, certainly not any naval academies or seminaries. So the boys had to travel back to Russia to continue their education. All of them did well. One of them became a ship builder and the other was a naval officer, and all of them came home to work their trade in Alaska.

Jacob studied history and theology at seminary. It's very likely he knew John Veniaminov, who was very well known there. The future St. Innocent was a year or so ahead of Jacob. We don't know if they were friends, or only knew of each other, but they would be, in just a few years time, colleagues in Alaska. In 1825, when he was 23, Jacob was tonsured a sub-deacon. That same year, he married a Siberian woman (who herself may have been of mixed parentage – Russian and one of the native Siberian peoples) named Anna Simeonovna. He graduated the following year and on October 31, he was ordained a deacon and assigned to Holy Trinity-St. Peter's Church in Irkutsk. But he was homesick, and after his ordination to the priesthood in 1828, at the age of 26, he, his wife, and his father, who had just been tonsured a reader, left Irkutsk for the island of Atka. If you look back at that map of Alaska, it's about halfway down the chain. His parish extended from Atka Island all the way to the Kuril Islands, just off the coast of Japan. He was the first native Alaskan to be ordained to the priesthood.

Jacob arrived at Atka in 1829, to find that while he had a house, there was no church building. They used a tent until a proper building could be erected. Father Jacob had an advantage over his colleague, Father John Veniaminov, because he was already fluent in both Russian and the Unangen language which his parishioners spoke. The two men had a lot in common. They were both intelligent and curious. They shared the same conditions of work – both had territories that stretched for hundreds of miles along the Aleutian island chain and had to rely on kayaks and Russian American Company ships to minister to

their people. They both kept notes and observations about the local animal and plant life. Jacob even went so far as to collect specimens of local plants and animals and send them back to European and Russian museums. Both men kept accurate and detailed weather records. They both translated parts of the Gospel into Unangan in the alphabet Fr. John had invented, and they used to correspond with each other about the problems they encountered in their translation work.

Once the church was built on Atka island, Father Jacob, with an assistant sent from Sitka, began to teach the children both their church education and how to read and write in both Russian and Unangan. He spent a great deal of time traveling from one island to another in order to ensure his people had services, could give their confessions, and were properly educated in the faith. He would paddle from island to island in a native kayak with only the thin hide hull of the boat between him and the icy waters of the Bering Sea. His legs ached with the cold, and it wasn't long before arthritis set in.

In 1836, his wife, Anna became sick. It was clear, after a time, that this was more serious than just a virus or an infection, so she traveled to Sitka, to the hospital for diagnosis and treatment, but the news wasn't good. She had cancer, and in those days, there wasn't much they could do. She died before the end of the year. That same year, Father Jacob's house burned to the ground, and while no lives were lost, Father Jacob was left with nothing. He had to rebuild from the ground up. The following year, 1837, his father died, and he was bereft. The two years of constant grief, on top of the years of hardship and unrelenting work took their toll, and he wrote to his bishop in Irkutsk asking to be released from his work, so he could enter a monastery. The bishop agreed, but said that he couldn't retire until a replacement arrived. Father Jacob agreed and continued to work with his people, paddling from island to island, ministering to their needs, listening to their problems and confessions, serving the liturgy for them, and baptizing new converts and babies.

Sometime around 1841, the newly appointed Bishop Innocent, Father Jacob's old friend, stopped at Atka, possibly while he was on his way to Sitka to take control of his diocese. He invited Jacob on board the ship, and for three days, the men talked. What they talked about we don't know, but when he came back to Atka, it was to announce that shortly, he would be leaving his parish, where he'd served for over ten years, to go into the interior of Alaska to do mission work. The move didn't happen until 1844, when St. Jacob, now 38 years old and in poor health, was assigned to Kvikhpak, what we now call Russian Mission, on the Yukon River. This time, however, he had three assistants with him: Innocent Shayashnikov, Deacon Constantin Lukin, and St. Jacob's nephew, Vasili Netsvetov. The parish, like Atka, stretched for hundreds of miles up and down the Yukon river, and once again, he was dependent on water travel to get around. The climate was unforgiving and very different from what he was used to. In the Aluetian Islands, it was damp and foggy and cloudy and rainy as well as cold. But in the interior, it was even colder. It froze up in September and didn't thaw until June. Skin tents are fine for keeping out the rain, but in a minus-forty-degrees snowstorm, the hide doesn't do much to keep you warm.

Fr. Jacob had to learn a new language, Yupik, and invent an alphabet for the people so they could learn to read the Gospels and the services. He was amazingly successful at his work, and he records baptizing hundreds of people at a time. He was an incredible story teller and was able to show the people how the faith completed and illuminated the things they already believed in and practiced. He loved and looked after his people, even caring for the sick when he himself was barely well enough to leave his bed. He dispensed medicine to them, preached to them about peace and treating your enemies well.

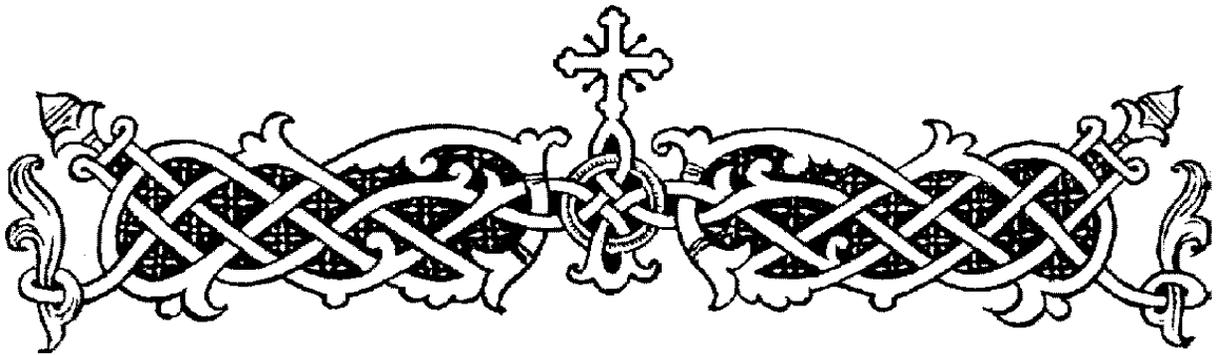
He was so successful, in fact, that in 1853, he was more or less kidnapped by a delegation of Athabaskan Indians, who were the traditional enemies of the Yupik people. They showed up at Russian Mission and demanded to see the priest, bundled him

into their boats, and took him on a three- or four-day trip up river. They kept him in a closed hut for a day when they arrived at their destination, and when they brought him out, it was so he could tell his stories to a crowd of hundreds of people from all over the Athabaskan territory. For three days, he preached and told stories, and at the end, he spent three days baptizing all the people. The last day, a Sunday, he held liturgy and then traveled back to Russian Mission.

All through these years, from 1844 until 1860, his health grew worse. He was bedridden for months, but no matter how sick he was, he forced himself to conduct the Holy Week services. They acted as medicine to him, for by Pascha, he would be renewed and healed for another year.

But his troubles were not confined to arctic weather and bad health. In 1849, he had requested an assistant for another mission, at St. Michael's Redoubt. The man who was sent was very troubled, and had been transferred to the Alaskan area because of problems back in Russia. He was miserable and blamed St. Jacob for his troubles, to the point where he attacked the priest and had to be restrained until he calmed down. His replacement was even worse. Obviously insane, he was eventually defrocked, but before that happened, he refused to leave the Redoubt, locking himself in his cabin and accusing St. Jacob of trying to poison him.

This man brought serious, but also ridiculous charges against both St. Jacob and his assistant, Deacon Lukin, which no one took seriously. But Bishop Peter (St. Innocent was now in Moscow as the Metropolitan) was new to the area, and brought Father Jacob down to Sitka to investigate. The charges were found to be false, but his health was now so bad the bishop transferred him to a small Tlinglit chapel in Sitka. While he was there, he found his wife's grave and had a headstone erected on it. But the years of work, from 1829 to 1863 (34 of them!) had taken their toll and Father Jacob died in 1862 at the age of 64. He's buried near the entrance to the chapel in which he served, with his wife's grave a few hundred paces away. +



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### June

Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM

**Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday of All Saints**

- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM

**Monday June 8<sup>th</sup> – START OF APOSTLES FAST**

Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM

**Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> – Sunday of North Americas Saints**

- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM

**Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup> - Perogie Workshop**

- Morning – 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

- Evening – 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> – Perogie Workshop and Pickup

- Workshop – 8:00 AM – Done

- Pickup – 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

**Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> - Stuffed Cabbages**

Workshop – 8:00 AM – Done

**Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> – SLAVIC FOOD FESTIVAL**

- Festival – 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. of Pentecost/Father's Day**

**- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM**

**Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Eve of Nativity of John the Baptist**

**- Great Vespers – 6:30 PM**

**Wed., June 24<sup>th</sup> - NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

**- Patronal Feast Divine Liturgy – 9:00 AM**

**Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM**

**Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost**

**- Sunday Divine Liturgy**

**Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup> – Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul**

**- Festal Divine Liturgy – 9:00 AM**

## **July**

**Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> - Great Vespers – 6:00 PM**

**Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost**

**- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 PM**

**Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM**

**Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost**

**- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM**

**Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM**

**Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup> – Fathers of the first 6 Councils**

**- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM**

**Fr. Nikolai will be in Atlanta from July 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>  
for the OCA All American Council**

**Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM**

**Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup> – St. Jacob, Enlightener of Alaska  
- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM**

**Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup> – Great Vespers – 6:00 PM  
Beginning of the Dormition Fast!**

**Sunday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost  
- Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 AM**

## ALTAR CANDLES

**Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>** - (Lazarus Saturday) - Donated by Alexandra Eframo, in thanksgiving for all the memorable times spent with Harry Papaila and Frank Kaminsky.

**Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>** - Donated by Valerie Kennedy in memory of Alan Kennedy on his Birthday.

**3 Candles at St. Panteleimon:** Donated by Garrette M. and Nancy Jean Blubaugh for the health and well-being of Jayden Edwards.

**Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>** – (Holy Thursday) - Donated by Fr. Paul and Matushka Helen Ziatyk in memory of John and Pauline Ziatyk and Walter and Pauline Radon!

**Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>** – (Holy Friday) - Donated by Valerie Kennedy, for the health and well-being of Richard Zalupski on his birthday!

**Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>** – (Holy Saturday) - Donated by Mark and Susan Kennedy in memory of Alan Kennedy, and Stanley and Pearl Zalupski!

**Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>** – (PASCHA) - Donated by Linda Soulcheck and Marlene Wray, for the Health, well-being and Protection of: Janet and Linda Soulcheck, Rosalie Leri, and Marlene Wray

**Paschal Candle** – Donated by Linda Soulcheck and Marlene Wray, In the memory of Charles and Anastasia Soulcheck and departed family members and all departed members of St. John's

**Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>** - Donated by Patricia, Philip, Anastasia, Emily, and Steve for the health and well-being of Frank Kaminsky on his birthday!

**Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>** - Donated by Valerie Kennedy in memory of Stanley Zalupski on his birthday.

**Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>** - Donated by Mark, Susan, and Megan Kennedy, for the health and well-being of Jayme Kennedy on her graduation from the University of Pittsburgh!

**Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>** - Donated by for the health and well-being of Mary Christine Purdy on her birthday!

**3 Candles at St. Panteleimon:** Donated last Sunday by Subdeacon Harry and Catherine Papaila for the health and well-being of Leon Parshook.

**Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup>** - Donated by Mark, Jayme, & Megan Kennedy for the health and well-being of Susan Kennedy, Valerie Kennedy, Dawn Miller, & Patricia Rinebolt, and, in memory of Pearl Zalupski.

**3 Candles at the Golgotha:** Donated last Sunday by by Judith Goldberg and Joan Mitchum in memory of Jessie Fritzky.

**Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>** - Donated for the health and well-being of Fr. Paul by Matushka Helen and the children on his 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of ordination to the Priesthood!

**Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>** – (Ascension) - Donated this past Thursday in memory of John and Theresa Klos.

**Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>** - donated by Judith Goldberg and Joan Mitchum in memory of John and Jessie Fritzky.

**Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>** - donated by Tom and Daria Thimons in memory of Anastasia Klimenko.

## **Perogie Making**

**No Perogie Workshop in July**

**The next Perogie workshop will be Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>**

**THANK YOU!**

**PEROGIES:** Don Rywak, Frank Kaminski, Bob Kraynik, Dorothy and Donald Chlodney, Becky Hixson, Nick Bia, Alexis Parshook, Deacon Joseph and Matushka Kathy Rabickow, Fr. Nikolai, Fr. Paul, Harry Papaila, Valerie Kennedy, Elaine and Richard Duncan, Evelyn Herrick, Hope Cain, Pam Kraynik, Marion Kuniak, Ellie Parshook, Bruce Parshook, Mark and Susan Kennedy

## **VIGIL DONATIONS (3/22 – 5/10)**

Alan Kennedy – 8 Olga Fritzky - 1	Stanley Zalupski – 1 Pearl Zalupski – 1	Marie Gresko – 2 Beth Amato - 2
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## **Summer Slavic Food Festival**

**The Summer Festival this year is set for SATURDAY, JUNE 20th. If you can make it, please come and enjoy some wonderful Slavic Foods!**

**Cash donations to help offset the cost of the event are welcome. The expenses will run somewhere around \$2,000 An envelope is attached to the last page of this newsletter.**

# MOTHER'S DAY VIGILS

## LIVING MOTHERS

Barbara Haught	Kelly Tiberio	Tenley Watton
Becky Hanes	Elaine Boris	Jan Hanks
Mary Christine Purdy	Hope Cain	Joan Parshook
Norma Purdy	Patty Kaminski	Patricia Rinebolt
Kim Hanes	Matushka Helen	Margaret Temchik
Christine Scott	Julianne Dailey	Mary Eror
Valerie Kennedy	Genevieve Ziatyk	Tammie Scarano
Susan Kennedy	Nancy Belitskus	Dana Cirico
Karen White	Grace Beresik	Ann Mastowski
Megan Kennedy	Eve Ann Faybik	Mary Kaminski
Renate Miller	Marion Kuniak	Joanne Kaminsky
Dawn Marie Miller	Christina Spiezio	Dawn Lovic
Lynda Zalupski	Christa Herrick	Kita Georgevich
Jean Trebilcock	Evelyn Herrick	Linda Parshook
Dorothy Chlodney		

## DEPARTED MOTHERS

Mary Laitinen	Alice Klems	Pauline Radon
Lorraine Lasik	Patricia Daugherty	Catherine Radon
Sophie Pelisau	Anna Mary Trebilcock	Mary Osipuk
Shirley Crawford	Anna Papaila	Emma Rywak
Anna Sprock	Nellie Sadorick	Sharon Rywak
Pearl Zalupski	Olga Magerick	Eva Weremeychik
Irma Johns	Cecilia Dom	Alexandra Weremeychik
Olga Fritsky	Dorothy McLandon	Mary Sudia
Rita Beveridge	Theresa Klos	Marie Kuniak
Delphine Miller	Julia Wanchisen	Anna Weremeychik
Mary Fritsky	Pearl Kaminsky	Anna Fedio
Elizabeth Zalupski	Pauline Ziatyk	Susan Fedio
Ann Jacobs	Mary Ziatyk	Veronica Sneiderger
Anna Mudlo	Rose Thomas	Julia Herrick
Maria Parshook	Theresa Nightwine	Mary Parshook
Lottie Kapezyski	Nancy Colclaser	Ann Labecki



# Summer Slavic Food Festival

Saturday,  
June 20<sup>th</sup> 2015  
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church**  
**150 Elmtree Road, New Kensington, PA 15068**

**Delicious Ethnic Foods: Stuffed Cabbage! Perogies! Holushki!  
Kolbasi and Kraut! Homemade Borscht and Vegetable Soup!**

**Delectable Baked Goods: Nut, Poppyseed, Apricot, and Cream Cheese  
Rolls! Breads, Pies, and Cakes! As well as much more!**

**TAKE-OUTS AVAILABLE!**