

# Daylight

A Ministry of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.

“...now you are  
light in the Lord.  
Walk as children  
of light...”  
(Ephesians 5:8)

**D.A.Y.**  
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## Reflecting on My Journey to Orthodoxy

by Emily Hunter

*“It is God who brought me to His Church so that I might be closer to Him”*

As September neared its end, I couldn't help but think back to where I had been a year earlier. I remember walking down the streets of Chinatown looking past the different Asian food stores for some sign of a church. Although I knew that the parish I was looking for was in the area, I couldn't help but wonder if I was on a wild goose chase. All of a sudden, I found myself in front of a beautiful, white church adorned with large domes. Without any hesitation or second thoughts, I walked in.

I was warmly greeted by a man standing behind the counter in the narthex and welcomed to go into the nave. As I walked past the pews, I was overcome with a sense of quiet and peacefulness. The church smelled of incense, was dimly lit by candles, and icons of the Saints hung along the walls. I was told that I had missed Vespers but that Liturgy would be served the following morning at ten o'clock. I left a few minutes later, got into my car and headed home. I look back at myself then with a smile. I was completely unaware to how the Lord was working in my life, and gently leading me closer to Him.

Surprisingly, for an eighteen year old, I woke up early the next morning. I remembered that Liturgy was at ten and thought to myself that I might as well go check it out since I was already awake. So I left my house and drove to Chinatown. As I walked into the church I was again hit with the same sense of calmness. I sat in the back row and was welcomed by two parishioners. Our



Emily Hunter

conversation was cut short by the sound of a bell being rung and the congregation standing up. I looked around at the people in the church as some of them crossed themselves and others stood completely still as if intently waiting for something. I couldn't help but wonder what it was they seemed to be waiting so earnestly for. My attention was soon brought back to the front when I heard the words, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” come from that Altar. At those words, a voice inside me told me that what I was about to experience was going to be different from anything I had ever been exposed to.

Throughout the Liturgy, the two sisters whom I had met before the service whispered things into my ear explaining what was going on. Following Liturgy, everyone was invited to the parish hall for coffee and a light lunch. Once in the hall, I was greeted by a myriad of Christian backgrounds. I quickly learned that roughly one-third of Christ the Savior was made up of converts. I was also told that the parish priest, Father Maxym Lysack, was the Orthodox chaplain at the university I attended and that he led a Bible study and OCF meeting there every week. And so my journey into the Orthodox Church began.

Roughly seven months later, I was received by Chrismation into the Church on the eve of the feast of St. Mary of Egypt. People often ask me why I converted to Orthodoxy

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DAYLIGHT PULL-OUT SECTION

## CAMP NAZARETH

by Katie Verbitsky



Katie Verbitsky works on her prayer rope during some free time at Camp Nazareth.

Sometimes I feel like the world has me trapped. There are so many bad things, things we shouldn't be doing or seeing, material things that we don't really need, things that move us away from God, and even ways that we shouldn't be acting or talking. But yet it is so hard. How do you stop, change, move closer and give up the things of the world? People don't understand any more that the world is different and it has changed. We are living in a time of electronics and new discoveries. Kids hardly play outside any more, because they would rather play video games or watch television.

It's hard to get close to God when the whole world is pushing you in a different direction. The world keeps you so busy that it is so hard to slow down and even think about what is more important. School, work, sports, clubs, after school activities, and chores; sometimes it's even hard to fit in dinner. Then you get really bummed when you finally realize that it's getting late and you still have homework to do and you are so tired that all you want to do is lie in bed and watch TV. Your days fly by and every morning you have to rip your body away from your bed just to do it all over again. We don't even think about God until Sunday morning, that is if we are even strong enough to go to church.

It's not just the world that may frustrate us, it's our friends. Everyone has those friends that they do everything with and they can talk to them about anything. No matter what, they will always be there and understand. You love to do things together, go out and have a good time or even stay in and just hang out. But when you think about it, can you really talk to you friends about what is most important? Can you have conversations about God, church, and religion? Or if you start talking about it will they think you're weird, get scared away, or

freak out? There are kids in school that don't act very Christian and some that never see the inside of a church. Some will act badly and others may even persuade you to act sinfully. Sometimes it seems like life is a game and those who run to God end up being the winners. Life can just get too stressful and too hard, but when summer comes I feel relief.

Every year since I was eight I have been going to camp. Camp teaches us how to deal with our everyday problems. It gives us a chance to figure out who we are and what kind of person we are going to become. It's good to get away from your parents and realize what kind of person you are going to be without them over your shoulder telling you how to act. At camp you can clear your head, think about things, and make good decisions. You get a chance to learn things about your faith that you may have never known and find answers to the questions that you have always had.

Camp takes you away from the worldly things that pull us away from Christ. There are no TV's, cell phones, or computers. This gives us a chance to live fully for God. We play games and do activities to show us that we can have fun and still act like a Christian.

God grows within us at camp, and we experience friendships that last a lifetime. It feels so good to spend a week with other people who know exactly what you are feeling, thinking, and going through. These friends are just like your friends at home, but they are better!!!! You can talk about your faith, and you can have fun without sin. Most importantly you can pray and sing together. When everyone in camp stands up and sings together you can almost feel all of the angels in the room

next to you just watching and praying. You can feel a weird chill up your spine. The warmest, greatest feeling will fill your heart like you are doing something that is more important for the first time. Friends at camp mean more than anything. The bond becomes so solid, and you will experience more joy and love over one week than you did all year. By the end of the week you will have realized that this is the way we should be living, and this is the way we want to stay. It's hard to leave camp and tears roll from everyone's eyes. Maybe this is because we know we are leaving something really great behind. Or we feel like we are saying good bye to Christ, because we know once we get back out into the world we won't have time for Him any more.

It doesn't have to be this way. We listen to the words we are taught at camp and we each take a little piece of camp home with us. Our friends at home think we are weird and sometimes make fun of us when we tell them we had a blast at church camp. We show them pictures and tell stories. However, they will never understand, because they didn't share our joy in God. They will never be like our friends at camp and they just aren't Orthodox. Camp is not just a great experience every summer, it is a transformation. We all turn into little Christs and every time we leave camp and tell our other friends what they are missing we are changing the world. We change the world, because camp changes us. With every sad tear we shed when we have to leave, hope is planted. Hope that next summer will come sooner; hope that we all will keep growing in Christ, and hope to spread our faith throughout the world! Who knows if I'd be the same person if I didn't go to camp? I would miss out on great memories, friendships, and FAITH!



Katie Verbitsky (back row, second from the left) is pictured with friends from cabin 1 during week one of the Diocesan Camping Sessions.

## Reflecting on the Annual Jr. ACRY Encounter

by Rachel Pribish



Junior A.C.R.Y. Encounter participants are shown playing a game of Monopoly with Amy Oblinsky, newly appointed adviser to the Juniors by the National Senior A.C.R.Y. President, Matthew Peifer.

If you've ever spent a week at Camp Nazareth during the summer, it's safe to bet that when you get home on Saturday, you start counting down the days until you can go back the next summer. I know that's always how I felt, and it's why I started to go for more than one week. You know what's more beautiful than Camp in the summer though? CAMP IN THE FALL!

Every year, the National Jr. ACRY hosts a weekend encounter for anyone in the camper age range (7-18). It's a week long camp session jam packed into one weekend! This year, the encounter was held from November 9-11 and there were 27 campers there! It may not seem like a lot if you're used to big weeks at camp, but more than half the people drove more than 5 hours to spend just so they could be there.

The weekend started on Friday

night when campers started to arrive. A movie was shown and Camp director Fr. Michael Ellis provided all campers and chaperones with some snacks for the night. After lights out, the chaperones waited until about midnight for the van from Binghamton to arrive, and after some mattress shifting, everyone was in bed for the night, and we all needed rest for the busy day ahead.

Saturday started with morning prayers and breakfast as usual. We then moved on to a religious education talk by National Jr. ACRY spiritual advisor Fr. Miles Zdinak on the difference between truth and lies. He also spoke about how the Church and the world we live in interpret truth and lies differently. After his talk, it was time for lunch. Next we had arts and crafts. The campers made bookmark crosses that they were able to take

home at the end of the weekend. Soon after it was time to get dressed for one of the most fun parts of the weekend: the football game! Every year we play a game of touch football. The game was competitive but full of fun and laughs.

After this, we cleaned up and got ready for vespers. This was followed by dinner and a short amount of free time in order to get ready for the campfire. Alex and Eli Hecox ran the campfire, and it was a sight to be seen. Everyone participated and had a good time, singing all our favorite songs that we sing at camp every summer. After the campfire, it was time to head upstairs to the dining hall for the dance! I told you we packed all the best things about camp into one weekend! Kris Carlisle, Ryan Ferko, and John Fucsko played "DJ" as Father Ellis had to leave early to attend the DDD dinner in Scranton.

On Sunday morning, Fr. Miles celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and all the campers participated in singing the responses. After the Liturgy, we all took a group photo in the church. Breakfast came next as we all neared the time we had to depart. Slowly, people made their way to cabins A & B to pack their things.

So, do you have to wait an entire year to get another experience? No way! The Jr. ACRY hosts a weekend encounter EVERY NOVEMBER on Veteran's Day weekend. The best part? You don't have to be a Jr. ACRY member to attend, but maybe once you do, you'll want to join. Next year the Jr. ACRY will celebrate their 25th anniversary and will be celebrating it during the weekend encounter at camp. We hope to see a lot of new faces and people who come for the love of the camp. A special thanks to Fr. Michael and Pani Jesica for letting us use the camp year after year.



Young people are shown making laminated crosses and finger weavings during the Junior A.C.R.Y. Encounter held at Camp Nazareth.

## Reflections from a "Rookie" Counselor

by Stephanie Coffman

Although I've been a camper at Camp Nazareth for the past eight years, this was my first summer on staff. It was an amazing experience that was made possible by Fr. Michael, Pani Jesica, the entire CN staff, and, of course, Jesus Christ!

Though I attend Divine Liturgy every Sunday, I had the opportunity to live a life in Christ for an entire month. I learned that living a life in Christ does not just mean going to church whenever possible, but to act a certain way all the time. The general rule of thumb for this was also this summer's theme: I Corinthians, 10:31. "Whatever you do, do all to the Glory of God!" Simply put by Fr. Michael, if you don't think you should be doing it, you probably shouldn't. I have tried to apply this to my life everyday both at camp and back at home.

This, however, was not the only thing I learned this summer. Living with sixteen children for eight weeks was an experience unlike anything I've ever done before. Yes, I was a camper, but it was a totally different experience being the one in charge of the children. Every camper had her own personality and it was a challenge to deal with sixteen different personalities at once. It was a big adjustment from dealing with only three brothers at home, but I learned a lot from my campers each week. Spending so much time with the children gave me some valuable insight and experience for what I will encounter in my future occupation as an elementary school teacher.

Overall, the month I spent at camp was amazing. If given the chance, I would, without a doubt, do it all again. I would like to thank Fr. Michael and Pani Jesica for giving me this opportunity and the rest of the staff for making my time at camp the experience it was.



Stephanie Coffman is pictured with her family during a visit to Camp Nazareth.

## 'Tis the Season.... for Giving!



One of my favorite stories about St. Nicholas involved a man and his three daughters. In the days that St. Nicholas lived, if a woman was to marry, her father had to offer a dowry, which was something of value, to the potential husband. The larger the dowry, the better the chance the woman would find a good husband. The man in our story had fallen on hard times, and didn't have enough money to provide *one* dowry, let alone three for all of his daughters. With seemingly no chance of getting married, the daughters would have most likely been sold into slavery. St. Nicholas, who came from a wealthy family, visited the man's home in secret three nights in a row, and threw a bag of gold through the window each night. Each bag of gold was more than enough for the father to use as a dowry. The man, wanting to know who had provided him with this blessing, waited up and caught St. Nicholas on the third night. Upon seeing that it was St. Nicholas who had been providing the gold, the man asked why he had done it. St. Nicholas answered, "because you needed it." The man asked why St. Nicholas had not let him and his family know who he was. St. Nicholas answered, "Because it's good to give and have only God know about it."

During the Christmas season, there will be a lot of focus on what people WANT for Christmas. Our society is very much a "GIVE ME" and "GOTTA HAVE" society. This is why St. Nicholas is such an important Saint for us to venerate and remember. There are many, many stories of his generos-

ity just like the one of the man and his three daughters. St. Nicholas is a tremendous example for us of love and caring and living a life in Christ, and especially of being giving. We can follow his example by trying our best to give of ourselves during the Nativity fast, leading up the birth of our savior. We can give of our time to our families. There is always a lot to do around the house at the holidays. We can help out in whatever way that we can. We can give of our time to the Church. There is a lot of preparation that goes into the Nativity in our Churches as well. Perhaps we can be of assistance there. We can give back to our communities. Many people need help during this time of the year. Perhaps there are items we could help donate or deliver to food banks, or soup kitchens. Many charities deliver toys to children and families in need. These are all things we can take part in. Ask your parents to help you, or try to organize an activity in your Church with your Jr. ACRY or youth group.

Remember when we do these things that we don't need to look for recognition or a pat on the back. St. Nicholas gave of himself when no one was looking. God sees what we do, and knows the good deeds that we do for others. The reward He will give us, eternal life in His heavenly kingdom, is the best reward we could possibly receive.

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Emily Hunter is shown with Thomas Beebe of cabin 3 during week three of the Diocesan Camping Sessions.

*-Journey to Orthodoxy, cont'd from page 1*

and I always struggle in answering them. As I continue to grow in my faith, I am coming to realize that through His mercy, it is God Who brought me to His Church so that I might be closer to Him.

Since my Chrismation, I have continued to immerse myself into the life of the Church. I thank God every day for all the blessings He has bestowed upon me and especially for all the wonderful Christians He has placed in my life. I often have to take time and sit back to ponder the magnitude and the beauty of how Christ has so mercifully been present in my life when I had done nothing to be worthy of it.

This is now my third semester as a member of the University of Ottawa's Orthodox Christian Fellowship. I still attend the weekly Bible studies led by Father Maxym, as well as participate in the events that are organized for the students. The Orthodox Campus Ministry has been such an important part of my spiritual life as well as my university experience. I know that this is the same for many other students. There have been times when there have not been enough chairs to accommodate all the young people who come to the Bible studies. What is beautiful is that it is proof that young people are thirsty to hear the Word of God and that they will show up to hear it.

This past summer, I worked at Camp Nazareth and it was truly an experience of a life time. I cannot explain to you the joy and inspiration it brought me by seeing our Diocesan youth eating, playing and praying together. I watched as the children grew in their faith and took ownership of their Orthodoxy for three weeks, July through August. We are blessed to have such a beautiful and Christ-centered camp within our Diocese and I hope that all the Diocesan children will be able to experience it. I often think of the other staff and the wonderful girls that I got to know in my cabin this summer. I look forward to seeing them all again next year when I return as a counselor. God willing I will see you all there also!



Emily Hunter is shown with fellow counselor, John Fucsko, and camper, Stevi McQueen.