

ST. INNOCENT CHURCH, REDFORD CELEBRATES ITS 50th ANNIVERSARY



On Saturday, October 28th, 2017, St. Innocent of Irkutsk Orthodox Church in Redford, Michigan, officially celebrated its 50th Golden Jubilee Anniversary. It was a glorious and magnificent day, enjoyed by all, featuring a joyous celebration of the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, followed by a marvelous festive banquet. On a chilly Fall day, the church was packed with people ranging in age from one-year-old to 94. Thirteen priests and four deacons concelebrated with His Grace John of Naro-Fominsk, Vicar Bishop of the Moscow Patriarchal Parishes in the USA. Joining the Mitered Archpriest Roman Star, who has been St. Innocent's Pastor for the past 33½ years, and the parish's two Assistant Priests, Fr. Daneil Shirak and Fr. Joshua Genig, were: the founding priest and first pastor, Archpriest Igor Burdikoff (OCA), who traveled here from near Albany, NY; the President of the Metro-Detroit Clergy Brotherhood, Protopresbyter Laurence Lazar (Romanian Episcopate, OCA) of St. George Cathedral, Southfield, and Fr. Roman's seminary classmate and friend for 50 years; Archpriest Andrew Yavornitzky (OCA) of St. Mark Church, Rochester Hills, (who sang in the choir); Fr. Mark Rashkov of St. Nicholas Cathedral, NYC, who accompanied Bp. John; plus seven other Patriarchal Parishes priests: Archpriest Paul Waters (retired) of Rives Junction, MI; Mitered Archpriest Timothy Barna of St. Michael the Archangel Church, Redford, MI; Archpriest Lawrence Bacik of St. Elias Church, Battle Creek, MI; Fr. Christopher Rozdilski and his assistant, Fr. Basil Gross, both of St. Andrew's Church, East Lansing, MI; Fr. James Anthony of St. John Chrysostom Church, Grand Rapids; and Fr. Michael Lillie, of Nativity of Christ Church, Youngstown, Ohio. Four deacons also served. Joining St. Innocent's Fr. Deacon Michael Comerford were two other Patriarchal Parishes' deacons: Fr. Dn. Daniel Woytowich of St. Michael's, Redford, MI; and Fr. Dn. Michael Cook of St. John Chrysostom, Grand Rapids, MI; assisted by Archdeacon Ioann Feloniuk (ROCOR) of Assumption Cathedral, Ferndale, MI. Three experienced altar servers from St. Elias and St. Andrew's assisted our St. Innocent's servers .

The choir director, Elizabeth Star Hatfield, enlisted the aid of 6 additional singers for our glorious Golden Jubilee: Fr. Andrew Yavornitzky, his Matushka Ruth, son Adam and daughter Alisha; Dana Rimelspach; Subdeacon John Lazar and Subdeacon Alex Matsko. The choir sounded wonderful and was a marvelous enhancement of the historic 50th celebration.

The day's celebration began with the greeting of His Grace, Bishop John, by Reader George Hanoian with the traditional bread and salt, and by the young children Clare, Emma and Rose Genig who presented His Grace with flowers.

The church was packed, with many people standing at the back. Joining St. Innocent's own parishioners, were former parishioners and numerous friends of St. Innocent's, with people driving in from Youngstown, Ohio, and all across Michigan — from Grand Rapids, East Lansing, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Rives Junction, Ann Arbor as well as from all around the entire Metro-Detroit area.

At the Little Entrance, Fr. James Anthony, Pastor of St. John Chrysostom, Grand Rapids, was awarded the right to wear a gold cross.

After the prayerful and inspiring Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, during which many people received Holy Communion, Bishop John congratulated the parish on its Golden Jubilee, and awarded thirteen Archpastoral Gramotas (*beautiful large award certificates*) to: Elizabeth Star, Sister Ioanna, First Elder John Andrayko, Reader George and Betty Hanoian, Deborah Hartz, Nick and Jo Anne Nicholas and Matushka Rose Marie (*see photos*), and also (*without photos*) to Mary Glover, Rose Nossal, Ed and Tiffany Manier, Mary Ann Harvilla, Jason Truskowski and Becky Jurczynyn.



After the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, everyone convened to St. Michael the Archangel Church's banquet hall (1¼ mile away), for a delicious catered dinner attended by 150 people, seated at 19 round tables. Available were the beautiful 8½ x 11, full-color, 50th Anniversary booklets, and round magnets and 4x6 icon cards depicting the parish's patron saint, St. Innocent of Irkutsk. The tables had beautiful centerpieces, which one person at the table won to take home.



During the course of the lovely, relaxed, family-style multi-course dinner, the program included short messages from the Pastor during the past 33 ½ years, Fr. Roman, and from our bishop, Vladyka John. Fr. Joshua was the MC and spoke briefly about the parish's history, especially recognizing the presence of the founding priest, Fr. Igor Burdikoff, who had come from the Albany, NY area for our Golden Jubilee.



Also recognized was Matushka Mary Donahue of East Lansing, who is almost 95 years old, who is the wife of the late Mitered Archpriest Photius Donahue, whose 34th anniversary of his repose was on November 1st. Fr. Photius and Matushka Mary were the founders of St. Andrew's Church in East Lansing in 1952, which was the first all-English Orthodox parish in Michigan, and also helped found the Orthodox parishes in Jackson in 1956 and in Battle Creek in 1966. Thus they were strong supporters of the founding of our all-English St. Innocent parish in 1967, which is in the same Central States Deanery, of which Fr. Photius was the Dean at the time.



Also on the program, the parish's First-Elder, John Andrayko, spoke on behalf of the parish, thanking Fr. Roman for his 33½ years of dedicated service as Pastor, and presented Fr. Roman with a magnificent jeweled cross. Then Elizabeth expressed the parish's appreciation to Assistant Priests Fr. Daneil and Fr. Joshua, to Deacon Michael and to Sister Ioanna, for their various liturgical and educational ministries and service to St. Innocent Church, and presented each of them with beautiful icons. The program ended with the raffle drawing for 10 large baskets of various mixed items, facilitated by the Hancock family — Kim and Mark, and their children Henry, Claire and Eva, who also took care of welcoming people at the ticket-reservation table, and showing people to their assigned table and seat. After the raffle, informal fellowship continued for a while.



Everyone seemed to really enjoy themselves at this exceptionally well-organized, historic occasion, and the St. Innocent clergy and parishioners truly appreciate the support of so many people from outside the parish. The 50th Anniversary Committee (Elisabeth Star Hatfield, Chair; Fr. Joshua and Matushka Abigail Genig; John Andrayko; Mary Ann Harvilla; Jason and Debra Truskowski; Becky Jurczynszyn), and all the many other people who assisted in one way or another in planning for this glorious day throughout the entire past year are to be congratulated and commended for the stupendous success of this grand, historic event. The collective work of so many people is much appreciated by all. Deep gratitude is expressed to everyone who attended.

Prepared by Sister Ioanna, St. Innocent Monastic Community, Redford, MI

This article is also available on the church website, where photos can be enlarged by clicking on them.

View the full photo slide-show of about 250-260 photos on the church website at: <https://stinnocentchurch.com/parishs50thanniversarycelebration.html>