

## **Commissioned to Make a Difference**

In this article, Fr. Andrew discusses the future of Evangelism at Assumption including our responsibility to further the faith in our own backyard.

The “Great Commission” of Christ was communicated as His final words before our Lord left earth and ascended into the heavens ~ “And Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age.’ Amen. (Mt. 28:18-20).” The work of the Church is a synergy between God and humankind. The power to accomplish the will of the Father rests in Christ. However, His commission to Go and make disciples rests in the hands of His faithful servants who have ears to hear and hearts set on fulfilling this calling.

### **Assumption Planted the Church in Prescott**

For the past fourteen years while we were building our own community and making disciples here in Scottsdale, we have been directly involved in the planting of a new Greek Orthodox Church in Prescott, Arizona. In 1999, I was contacted by a small group of Orthodox Christians living in Prescott and for the next seven years liturgies were celebrated on Saturdays by three different priests. In 2006, Fr. Gabriel Cooke (of blessed memory) was the first priest assigned to the mission and he served faithfully for two years. Following Fr. Gabriel, Fr. John Peck came to us seeking an assignment and for the next four years the church grew and developed under his care. They have now purchased a property with a sanctuary that accommodates 125 people, a small fellowship hall, a few classrooms, office space and an adjacent home that is leased out to businesses for additional income. In 2012, Fr. Apostolos Hill (now serving at Holy Trinity Cathedral) was assigned, and in one year the facilities were transformed and enhanced as he led the effort to revitalize their aged facilities. The Orthodox Church of St. George in Prescott is now in need of another priest and I have been once again assigned the task to assist His Eminence in finding a new priest for them.

### **Finding the Right Priest for Prescott**

After having been involved in the assignment of each priest to Prescott over the years, a great deal has been learned about the necessary skills a priest must have to do this very specialized ministry of the Church. It is specialized because of the unique community dynamics which exist. It is made up of many young families, retired families, recent converts and life-long Orthodox Christians from every jurisdiction including Greek, Antiochian, OCA, Serbian, Romanian etc. This community is in many ways a “one of a kind” phenomenon in the United States and represents the future of Orthodoxy in America. The faith of this small community of 50 families is very strong and their

sacrificial giving over the years has been a witness to their deep desire to see a permanent parish in the Prescott area.

Our Lord is now sending a humble and gifted priest with all the necessary skills to minister to the Church in Prescott but one...experience. This is where our community can make a difference in the future of the Church in Prescott. Currently, the Parish Council is discussing Assumption's assistance in the training of Fr. Jeffrey Frate for his new assignment. The assistance that the Council is discussing is to have Fr. Jeffrey be first assigned to Assumption for five months of training beginning in January of 2014. This short-term training would allow him to become familiar with the functioning of a Greek Orthodox parish and develop leadership skills for the future. During this period the expense would be shared between the Prescott community and Assumption.

Prescott would provide one quarter of his compensation and have him one weekend a month, and Assumption would provide the remaining portion and have him with us the rest of the time. Fr. Jeffrey would then assume the role of parish priest in Prescott beginning June 1, 2014. Should the Parish Council adopt this proposal, it would be brought to the General Assembly on November 10th and presented as part of our 2014 budget.

In 2006, Fr. Jeffrey Frate, a member of the OCA, moved from Rochester, NY along with his family of three children and enrolled at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary in Boston. He graduated with high distinction from Holy Cross Seminary in 2009. Fr. Jeffrey excelled as a student. Fr. Jeffrey was brought to my attention after graduating without an assignment in the OCA and has since been painting houses to provide for his family. In August of this year, Fr. Frate and his family came to Arizona and visited the Prescott mission, and His Eminence has given His blessings for the assignment provided he receives the necessary training being proposed.

Overall Ministry Goal Calls for Stewardship to increase from \$350,000 to \$375,000 in 2014

The 2014 ministry budget is currently under development but initial increases as well as the additional \$24,000 for the new priest training proposal indicate an overall increase in Stewardship from \$350,000 to \$375,000. Ministries are being reviewed, some have been re-purposed for the priest training proposal and how the allocation of the \$21,600 in Verizon Cell Tower income (beginning in 2014) will be utilized shall be considered as well.

The one thing every year we are asked to do is to prayerfully consider our personal role in fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ. Stewardship is a measurement of our response to the Great Commission. The annual ministry budget of Assumption is presented in terms of doing the work of Christ by: assisting those in need with our Good Samaritan Fund; providing scholarships for families who cannot afford to send their

children to summer camp; educating our youth and adults in the Faith; assisting the monastics at St. Paisios convent in Safford, Arizona; providing scholarships for seminarians; supporting the seminary, the national ministries of the Archdiocese and the regional ministries of the Metropolis; assisting the orphans at St. Innocent Orphanage at Project Mexico; supporting missionaries foreign and domestic; and sending annual assistance to the mission Church in Prescott which we have been supporting since its conception.

#### Not Equal Gifts But Equal Sacrifice

This means that in contemplating our Stewardship commitment for 2014 we will prayerfully ask our Lord what He wants to see each of us do! We do not expect equal gifts but we are all called to make equal sacrifices. We will think about our Stewardship Commitment and how it will directly assist and establish a permanent Greek Orthodox community in Prescott. We will think about how someone who has been called by God to serve Him was, by our assistance, empowered to stop painting houses in order to serve our Lord at His most Holy and sacred Altar!

+Fr. Andrew