

An exercise in recycling!

A Canadian iconostasis finds a new home in North Carolina!

When the faithful of Ottawa's Annunciation/Saint Nicholas Cathedral offered their old iconostasis to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission in High Point, NC, the parishioners were delighted by the good news. But the "other" news was that the iconostasis was in Canada, which meant that someone had to make the nearly 2,000 mile round trip trek from North Carolina to Ottawa to pick it up.

Excited by the prospect of a road trip, Adam Oldham and his friend Rob volunteered.

"After driving for well over a dozen hours, we arrived in Ottawa on a Saturday at 7:30 p.m., just as Great Vespers ended," said Adam. "Since there weren't enough people around to pack up the iconostasis that night, we decided to wait until after the Sunday Divine Liturgy to load the truck.

"We met some of the most wonderful people during our short stay in Ottawa," said Adam. "One of the parishioners gave us her house for the evening, even though she was going out of town. Later, we ate with Deacon Gregory Scratch's fantastic family before unpacking and settling in for a good night's sleep."

The next morning, Adam and Rob attended the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada. They soon discovered that they would be transporting more than just an iconostasis.

"The Liturgy that morning was quite special – on the one hand, it was the first hierarchical Liturgy I had ever attended, and it was the first time I had witnessed the blessing of a new church building," said Adam. "After a fellowship meal, we set out to fulfill our task – packing the truck with the iconostasis, piece by piece. In the process, Deacon Gregory was intent on loading up the truck with other items, including an old chandelier and an icon shrine. Mission accomplished!"

By 3:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon, Adam and Rob began the 14 hour drive back to North Carolina – knowing that they both had to go to work the next morning!

Holy Cross Mission was planted in 2005 by a small group of families from Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point, NC. At their first meeting, the fledgling mission's members prayerfully decided to work diligently to establish a new community. After contacting the Orthodox Church in America, the Rev. Marcus Burch of Greenville, SC and the Rev. William Mills of Charlotte, NC generously offered their help, celebrating Vespers every other Sunday night and the Divine Liturgy once every few months. Eventually, through the help of the Carolinas



Step-by-step, the iconostasis that for years had graced Ottawa's cathedral transformed the interior of Holy Cross Mission, High Point, NC.

Deanery Missions Fund and the Diocese of the South, mission members were able to support financially a priest and his family.

In the summer of 2006, the Rev. Christopher Foley arrived, and the mission faithful – 18 adults and 16 children – began celebrating the Divine Liturgy weekly in a hotel banquet room. Several months later, they located a rented facility that allowed them to celebrate a more regular and complete cycle of services.

"We were able to acquire the beautiful iconostasis from Canada, which really helped create a more permanent looking Church home," said Father Christopher. "During our second year, we applied for the OCA Department of Evangelization's Church planting grant, which we began receiving in January 2008."

The grant made it possible for Father Christopher to minister full-time and to devote more energy to the building up of the parish.

"Through the hard work of all of our faithful, we have continued to grow," said Father Christopher. "Currently we serve about 60 communicants, and some Sundays we are pushing 80 worshippers. The exciting thing is that of these 60, almost 20 of them embraced Orthodox Christianity at Holy Cross!"

The iconostasis is in place, but perhaps not for long.

"We are in the process of looking for suitable land upon which we could build a permanent church," said Father Christopher. "God is good, and it is wonderful to see everyone working together as missionaries eager to welcome new folks and to communicate the fullness of the Orthodox Christian Faith here in the South." ■