



Photos by Susan McKinney

Eugene Kuttyreff, right, gives hand to younger brother Alexander in iconography.

## Russian Orthodox Teens Gather at St. Bernard's

Approximately 45 Russian Orthodox teenagers from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New York converged on the campus of St. Bernard's Seminary last week for a four-day retreat.

Sponsored by Upbeat Magazine, a publication geared for young people of the Russian Orthodox faith, the retreat's theme was Stairway to Heaven, and emphasized the 30 "steps to paradise" espoused by St. John Climacus.

Four workshops over the four days offered leadership training, music iconography, and scripture reading.

This was the first time the annual retreat was held in Rochester; Father Tom Wojcik, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church, Goodman Street, and coordinator of the retreat, said that the event is usually held in the Erie, Pa., area, but this year they wanted to "move east" to attract more youths from New York and Connecticut.

He also said that the youth group from St. John's did most of the organizing.

Most of the teenagers attending were high school



Janet Augusta, coaching the workshop in music, holds her stomach in and asks fellow retreatants to do likewise.

students or college freshmen. Father Nick Bacalis of Jamestown, who assisted Father Wojcik, said that youths were primarily group leaders, and that one of the retreat's objectives, through the leadership workshop,

was "to get other kids interested in youth programs."

Also assisting Father Wojcik were Fathers George Alexson of Binghamton and Paul Sawchuk of Pennsylvania.

## God on the Playing Field: Of Athletes and Evangelism

**New York [CPF]** — If athletic fame and hero worship can be transferred from the playing field to the commercial world to sell products, why can't it also be tapped to help sell religion?

That question is partly behind what one religion editor calls the "slick promotions" stylish dress and organized 'Christian' athletes who have replaced the cruder, less affluent efforts of free-lance preachers like Billy Graham, who gave up second base for the sawdust trail.

Ken Briggs, religion editor of the Long Island newspaper Newsday, offered two main reasons for the increase in the number of Evangelistic athletes. One, it is a respectable way for wealthy people to get close to modern-day heroes; second, it reinforces the athlete's belief that God is on his side in competition.

As latest evidence of a sports convert to evangelism, Briggs cited the appearance of tennis star Stan Smith at a dinner party in a penthouse atop the swank St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan.

According to Briggs, "One hundred twenty-five guests came, greeted the lanky blond star, sipped their fruit punch, and listened to the honored one in the striped tan suit read from the Bible and say he'd rather be known as a Christian than as a mere tennis idol."

When he spoke to the gathering, Smith said he began to think about his eternal destiny while still a sophomore at the University of Southern California. He was "playing good tennis then," he commented, "but I began to realize then if I was injured my life might be totally lost. I thought there must be more to life."

Someone asked him how he squared the Biblical message of love with his need to trounce someone on the tennis courts. He admitted it could create a moral dilemma in some people, "but it depends on how you approach it," he said. "Some guys try to build up a lot of hate. I try to respect the other guy and do my best."

Briggs said there is now what

amounts to an "all-star team" of Christian athletes, including quarterback Roger Starbuck of the Dallas Cowboys, who frequently speaks on "God's game plan for life."

Briggs also cited former Cleveland Browns lineman Bill Glass, now a minister, and former Yankee second baseman Bobby Richardson.

"Owing, perhaps, to its super zealous nature, football produces a high percentage of sports evangelists, Briggs noted. "By contrast, hockey players are distinctly absent."

"Although many of the most magnetic superstars stubbornly endorse hedonism instead, the Christian team has gathered considerable support, mostly through two groups, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the oldest and best-known, and the upstart Athletes in Action. Both groups and nearly all their members bear the stamp of conservative Protestantism marked by heavy stress on a personal experience with Christ, a strict moral code and converting the unwashed."



## ON THE LINE Bob Considine

The moderator of the panel of young handicapped persons gathered in Washington recently asked them, "Do you think you got a bad break from God? Do you feel any bitterness toward God?"

Bill Passmore, of East Chicago, Inc., a black man whose legs are off up to his hips, said, "I was in the hospital for about five years after I got hurt in football, undergoing amputations and all sorts of things. I never once felt that God was doing me any harm. Instead, I thought that God had done me some good because He made me stop and reevaluate my life and my goals, and to thank Him for what I had left. It's not what you don't have, it's what you do have that means so much. I've taken what God has left me and tried to rally around it and let it become an asset instead of a liability. If each of us in our daily lives will reach out and touch somebody in our lives, it will be a much better world. God has made me feel a much better man."

"I see God as short, black, and handicapped — no arms," said Shirley Price, who is short, black, has no hands, is superbly educated and works with computers at NASA's Manned Space Center near Houston. "You just make Him what you make Him, based on whatever life is to you. God is something within you. If all of us were to draw a picture that had not been instilled in our minds from the past by someone else's imagination as to what he saw God as, I guarantee you not one of us would come up with what the pictures and the little statues that are said to look like God."

"God and I have battles," continued the beautifully featured girl with the neat Afro. "God always wins. I'm going to give you the story about the first time He won, because I always think about it. On March 9, 1945, my mother got in labor. My father had gone to work. There were six or eight other kids in our family

when it was time for me to make my grand, dramatic entrance. My mother had lost her water in the seventh month, and therefore it was a dry birth. I had to come the hard way, feet first, and that turned out to be God's way telling me, Shirley, your feet will be your hands."

"When I was born, instead of the doctor spanking me on the hindpart to bring life, he was frightened to death. In the first place, I was black, full of hair and no hands. He was petrified. I was about .12 inches long. He immediately wrapped me in a blanket, put me in a shoebox and put the lid on it."

"When my mother finally came to herself, she asked her neighbor, 'Clarice, what was it?' Clarice said, 'Katherine, it was a beautiful little girl.' My mother said, 'Well, if it was such a beautiful little girl, why is it that I don't hear her hollering?' All my kids holler,' Clarice said, 'Well, the doctor said she was born dead. She's dead. Born dead.'

"By that time, 15 or 20 minutes had passed away. The doctor had gone. Clarice started to cry. She said, 'Katherine, the baby wasn't really born dead, but she doesn't have any arms, so the doctor just didn't try.' God didn't give my mother time to think about her condition. She just jumped up and said, 'I don't care if she doesn't have legs, hands, feet, or head. It's mine, and I want it.' So our neighbor lifted the lid off the shoe box, poured a dipper of water on me, and I kicked my way out of that blanket, and I've been kicking ever since."

The assembly of handicapped cheered and whistled.

When the applause died down, Shirley continued, "I've had more than that one experience with God, but it's that original experience that makes me so strongly believe that there must be a reason I'm here. I am not going anywhere but up, up, until I reach it."

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