



THE EASTERN ORTHODOX No 140: October 2021

His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev John, Metropolitan of Dubna and the Archdiocese of Western Europe

ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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The Church of St John of Shanghai, built in 1855, is the largest Russian Orthodox church building in the British Isles, and is attended by 4,000 Orthodox of 24 nationalities, with over 150 baptisms per year. It is a parish of the East of England Orthodox Church Trust (Charity No. 1081707), part of the Western European Archdiocese of the Russian Orthodox Church and cares for grassroots Orthodox of all nationalities all over Eastern England.

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Caretaker: Paul Hopkins, 69 Military Road

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Website: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk

Расписание Богослужений / Timetable of Services

Saturday 2 October

No Vigil / Всенощного бдения нет

Sunday 3 October

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 9 October: Metropolitan John's Visit. Архиерейское Служение с Владыкой Митрополитом Иоанном

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 10 October: Metropolitan John's Visit. Архиерейское Служение с Владыкой Митрополитом Иоанном

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Thursday 14 October: The Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Mother of God / Покров Пресвятой Богородицы

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 16 October

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 17 October

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Friday 22 October

6.30: Holy Unction / Maslo / Елеосвящение (Соборование)

Saturday 23 October

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 24 October

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 30 October

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 31 October

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Baptisms in September

4 /9: Julia Korona-Striy

4/9: Despina Papadimopoulou

5/9: Anthony Zimbrea

5/9: Narcisa Pirvulescu
10/9: Ioana Paladi
18/9: Valeria Vasilieva
18/9: Alexandra Mordvinska
18/9: Elizaveta Platon
19/9: Elena Saltira
19/9: Gloria Catuna
19/9: Gabriela Popescu
24/9: Timothy Patterson
24/9: Maria Stamatiadis

MODERN FOOLS FOR CHRIST. WHO ARE THEY? PART 1: LIUDMILA ALEXANDROVNA Memories of Pechory

[Svetlana Sidorova](#)



Archimandrite Adrian (Kirsanov) and Professor Alexey Ivanovich Sidorov

Liudmila Alexandrovna from Pechory

I met Ludmila Alexandrovna in the town of [Pechory](#) in 1981. She was renting a room from the same lady as I. She was probably God's answer to my prayer when I appealed to Him as soon as I became a Christian:

“Lord, show me the best part of Orthodoxy, the most genuine part, for I desire no fakeness. You know how I loathe hypocrisy!”

It was my first conscious prayer, and since the Lord is especially well disposed to neophytes, He always satisfies their requests to strengthen them in their faith. Well, Liudmila Alexandrovna was a beggar who begged alms on the church porch, and that's how she made her living. I learned about it only a few days later, even though I took note of her when I saw her for the first time. How could one not notice her? Liudmila Alexandrovna was a lively, skinny old lady with a sharp, penetrating gaze; her exceptionally bright mind fascinated all those who met her. I heard two or three sentences and I didn't want to part with her, wearing her out with questions: “What is this for? Why is that? What's the reason behind that?” Asking nothing and picking her words carefully, Liudmila Alexandrovna willingly answered my questions and soon I knew a few details about her life. Her mother was a pious woman who couldn't attend church very often—she was a single mother who had to work all the time. But she made her daughter go to church as often as possible.

“It often happened,” recalled Liudmila Alexandrovna, “that I didn't want to stay till the end of the service, but I couldn't leave early—my mother would surely ask me, ‘Who celebrated the service, who came to hear confessions, what passage from the Gospel was read?’ I was also asked to retell the content of a sermon. That's why I had to stay till the very end.”

Later on, she got used to being at church and willingly attended the services. But even though she was at church often, she didn't live in full commitment to God's will, just like many other people who separate church life from “life”, relying completely on themselves. So one day she was helping a girl who seemed to have trouble walking bring heavy bags to her house. On their way home, they got into conversation and Tatiana (that was her new friend's name) invited Liudmila Alexandrovna to her home. After asking about her life, she suddenly embraced her and began to cry:

“But you don't know our dear God at all!”

“What do you mean, I don't know? Liudmila Alexandrovna, said, surprised. “I am a cradle Orthodox. I go to church every Sunday.”

“No, you don't, you don't know Him, because you never turn to Him, you never seek His help; you don't know how good it is to be with Him. You have no idea what it is like to feel His love.”

“So, that's what it's all about!” Liudmila Alexandrovna said to herself. Admittedly, everything in her life seemed unsubstantial. She was divorced and her son had gone out of control long ago, living his own life. Her only consolation was her job—she worked as a daycare manager and she loved working with kids. She tried to find the reason why her life was so dull, but she could never arrive at an answer. “I think Tanya is right,” she thought. “I've suffered all my life because I couldn't find its meaning; I've been unable to understand the main purpose of our existence. Is it only about making it to old age and then dying? No, there must be something else to it. But what? What do I need in order to live a meaningful life? For example, why do I go to church? Is it just another habit? Well, yes, I feel safe there.

But once the service is over I suffer from loneliness and an incomprehensible yearning again.”

“But what should I do?” she exclaimed.

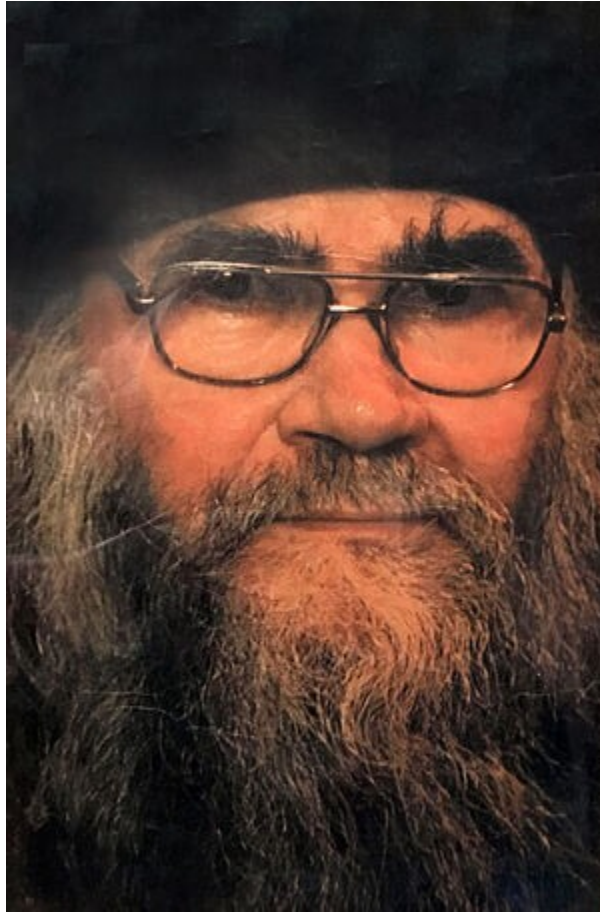
“You need to live differently, like an infant or an innocent child. All they know is how to listen to their mother and to hold her hand, because it is warm and they feel peaceful next to her. That’s how you should grab our dear God’s hand. Seek His advice every minute of your life. And after your heart learns to converse with Him through prayer, that’s when you will hear Him. What a joy it will be, you will feel so, so good, I can’t even explain it!” said Tatiana, looking at Liudmilla with her shining eyes. “Then you will need to find a spiritual father, you can’t live without one, his advice and prayers will assist you anytime your faith grows cold or you find yourself in sorrow. Of course, you need a spiritual father, by all means!”

When she got home, Liudmila Alexandrovna couldn’t come to her senses; she was trying to recall everything Tanya had told her. She was tormented by thoughts all night long and, by the next morning she decided to start a new life. As soon as she had made up her mind, she instantly felt warmth and peace settling in her soul. She turned to pray as Tatiana had taught her: “Lord, help me find You, do not let me perish without You!” The next day, she went to the [Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra](#), even though she lived far away from it.

“Why did you go there?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” she answered, “I guess it was my heart’s desire. Somehow, I knew for sure that it was where I had to go.”

How Fr. Adrian became her spiritual father



Archimandrite Adrian (Kirsanov)

On her way there, Liudmila Alexandrovna kept praying to the Lord to show her a father-confessor. She approached the very first priest she met and immediately asked him: “Batiushka, be my father confessor.”

“How can that be,” I interrupted her. “You asked the first priest you saw? Don’t you need to make sure somehow that he is right for you? I read that somewhere.”

“Of course, you should make sure that it is him; that’s why I prayed to the Lord to take me to one who was tried and tested. My only hope was in God. If you don’t pray, no matter whether you ‘check him out’ or not, you can still be mistaken. But God will not put your faith to shame. Nevertheless, batiushka told me at the time: ‘Why should you confess with me? Go see Fr. Naum.’”

“I did what he told me because I already knew that he was the one, my father confessor. So it happened that Fr. Naum looked at me long enough to say: ‘No, you are not mine.’”

“And he sent me back to the same batiushka I had just spoken to. I wasn’t surprised at all—I knew that’s how it was meant to be. So, I came back to him and said: ‘Batiushka, he said I am yours.’ ‘Mine?’ he said. ‘Well then you can come.’”

“As it turned out, he was the renowned [Elder Adrian \(Kirsanov\)](#). I learned a lot about him later and was able to ‘check him out’ him many times—I had such an opportunity. And I thank God for such a confessor. When I had a month left before my retirement, I asked for his advice about it. He said, ‘Why do you need that retirement money? Give it up.’ ‘What do you

mean, give it up?’ I asked. ‘What shall I do for a living?’ ‘It’s alright,’ he said. ‘You’ll survive without it.’

“That’s how I ‘survive’ without it. When Fr. Adrian was transferred to Pechory, I followed him, and it’s been fifteen years since I arrived here. I don’t need much: 1.50 rubles needed to rent a bed and one ruble for food per day. But I am so happy! I don’t need to worry about anything. All I truly need is to attend services and pray to God. I like reading the Psalter, especially the psalm about a beggar who feels dejected. It’s about me—I am also beggar.”

“What do you mean, a beggar?” I asked her again.

“That’s just what I mean. I’m a beggar, because I stand in front of the church begging. I live on charity.”

“Why didn’t I see you there?”

“There is no need for me to beg today. A girl gave me a ruble yesterday, and our Bishop blessed me with five rubles when he came to celebrate the feast. I only beg enough to collect 2.50 rubles a day. As soon I collect that much, I go to church. Other beggars ask me, ‘Why do you leave? You are proud.’ ‘Sure, I am proud, but pride has nothing to do with it. You should also attend church more often instead of worrying about getting more money,’ I retorted, but they wouldn’t listen. That’s fine, it’s their life; but for me there is nothing more precious than a church service.”

I was listening to Liudmila Alexandrovna’s story, feeling amazed at the beauty I unexpectedly encountered. This kind of beauty is the lot of a select few who can fulfill the commandment of God: *Sell everything you have ... then come and follow Me*. It was a life that has fallen out of favor in our times because it brings mockery and humiliation of every possible kind on those who hold it dear. If we didn’t have these Ludka-the-fools (as Liudmila Alexandrovna used to call herself), the Orthodox faith would have lost its vitality and unmatched subtlety.

By the grace of God, I knew that at that moment I had encountered the eternally living Tradition of the Church, carried across the centuries—invisible to wary and alien eyes—but which is quintessential to Orthodoxy. It is the Tradition, the infinite depository of the Church. It can’t be seen with physical eyes or understood by the carnal mind. The living experience of Orthodoxy can only be perceived within the secret chambers of our hearts. So, Holy Tradition, the love pouring out in our world, over which the gates of hell will not prevail, will never cease as long we have those who are still willing to walk in the Apostle Paul’s footsteps, asking, *Lord, what do You want me to do?* Not only do they walk in those steps, they also fulfill what the Lord commands them to do. Living in obscurity, they perform acts of faith in secret for the sake of their love for the Lord, knowing that He loves them in return.

How can she spend her whole life like that?! Someone offered Liudmila Alexandrovna a nice winter coat. She refused it.

“Why didn’t you take it?” I asked, surprised. “You’ve got nothing to wear in the winter!”

“Winter is still a long way off.”

“But what if no one brings anything before then? What will you wear?”

“It’s alright, the Lord will provide.”

Two months later, I shared her story with a friend in Moscow who then sent Liudmila Alexandrovna a warm coat.

The Lord didn’t forsake her. But how powerful her faith must have been to rely on Him as much as she did! I want to add that her father confessor didn’t seem to appreciate her ascetic deeds; he never even called her by name. More than that—every time Liudmila Alexandrovna came for confession he’d ask her, “What’s your name?” as if he had never met her before. I don’t know if she would get upset about this or not. She had abandoned worldly life, and it meant she wasn’t part of it anymore—this was all that mattered. “Just God and me,” she used to say—and that was her only consolation...

What surprises me is that there are plenty of people like her in Rus’.^[1] It isn’t an easy thing to meet them though. To see them, you have to become more like them—humbled and belittled—because they can’t be seen from the rarefied heights of our self-importance and self-will. By God’s providence, it happens either with neophytes or those who already know how to recognize them as poor in spirit. I was one of those neophytes at the time, and that is why I was given a chance, at least for a short time, to get up close and personal with the hidden mysteries of our faith.



Blessed Fools-for-Christ Mikhail and Nikolai. Photo: Anatoly Goriainov

Part 1.

I was also fortunate to meet Nikolai Trubin. Back in the day, he used to live near the [Pskov Caves Monastery](#). Many people remember him well. He was already called blessed, and anyone who had ever visited Pechory could tell their own story about him. People said that long before setting out on a path of foolishness-for-Christ, he taught at a seminary. In other words, he was like of those mysterious persons I read about before in an old book on fools-for-Christ. When I came to the Pskov Caves Monastery for the first time, I really wanted to meet him.

“Summer and winter alike, he wears a thick dark blue woollen coat—remember, the kind our fathers used to wear,” my friend Katya who had already been to Pechory described him to me. However, no matter how hard I tried to find Nikolai in a crowd of the faithful he was nowhere to be seen, and after a week I forgot about it. But then one day, as I was at church, I suddenly turned around and saw a man kneeling in the middle of the church with his head tilted to one side. “But here he is, Nikolai!” I immediately recognized him.

When I came to Pechory another time, to be united in [Holy Matrimony](#) with my husband (with Fr. Adrian’s blessing), my friend Liudochka and I (she was my maid of honor) entered a tiny deserted chapel. That’s where I saw Nikolai again. Everyone called him Nikolka. He was standing at an analogion, reading the Psalter in front of the icons. He was in his usual attire: a dark blue woollen coat, and his hair so matted it formed a tangled mass. “His hair looks like that because he sleeps on the ground and never takes a shower,” seasoned pilgrims used to say about him. Does he sleep on the ground or never take a shower? Well, why then do we smell a remarkably delicate fragrance in his presence?

When he saw us, Nikolai called me to come closer and handed me the Psalter:

“Read this”, he said.

“What do you mean? I can’t!” “Just read”, he insisted.

I stared at the letters, familiar yet strange at the same time, and tried to read the first word. I did it all wrong! The second one was just as hard as the first one. “I don’t think I can ever make it sound right!” the stubborn thought was running through my mind and I kept pushing the book back to its owner but Nikolai stood nearby correcting my errors. Suddenly, the words flowed easily and fluently, as if I had been reading Church Slavonic all my life. But then Nikolai took the Psalter away from me and handed it over to Liudochka. At first, she was at a loss, too, but soon enough she could read quite fluently. No wonder, for she had studied at the School of Language Arts. After that, Nikolai filled two buckets of water from a spring and handed them to us, saying:

“Go and pour it over yourselves.”

“How’s that, ‘pour it over ourselves?’”

“Just like that”, was his reply.

We left the chapel, turned the corner, and walked up a path. Then, without haste, we “simply” got undressed and doused ourselves with a bucket of ice-cold water. We heard voices far off but no one was on the path we were on.

A few years later in Zagorsk [the soviet-era name for Sergiev Posad, where the [Holy-Trinity St. Sergius Lavria](#) is located], I saw a neatly dressed priest with rich long hair pulled together with a rubber band. He was standing not far from the railway station surrounded by a crowd of people. It was Nikolai—there was no mistaking him. I came up for a blessing telling how him grateful I was for meeting him earlier, and then asked where he is now. He said that he was serving in Kirovograd, Ukraine. We talked for a little while and then parted ways. This time around, we parted forever: I learned not long ago that Fr. Nikolai died in 1997.

[Svetlana Sidorova](#)

Translation by Liubov Ambrose

ON A VISIT TO ORTHODOX JAPAN

[Natalia Shatova](#)



It's about 5,000 miles and nine hours on a plane from Moscow to Tokyo. To fly so far and not visit the main Orthodox church in Japan would be unthinkable, even if you're going to such a faraway land on a business trip.

What do we know about Japan, about the religion that the locals profess? The majority of them are syncretistic in their faith, simultaneously following the two main religions of Japan—[Buddhism](#) and Shintoism. But in this relatively small country there are more than forty active Orthodox churches, and their parishioners aren't simply Slavs who have moved to Japan, as you might first think. The parishioners of the country's main Orthodox church—the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Tokyo—are mainly Japanese. [St. Nicholas of Japan](#) was the first to bring Orthodoxy to the Japanese land.



St. Nicholas of Japan, c. 1912

Among the capital city's skyscrapers, the bright neon signs, and the screaming advertisements, the eye searches for the domes of an Orthodox church. Built on top of Suruga-dai Hill in the Kanda District, the cathedral, which the Japanese call Nikolai-Do (Nicholas Church), blends in quite organically with the urban landscape. The Equal-to-the-Apostles St. Nicholas (in the world Ivan Dmitrievich Kasatkin), who was born in 1836 in the Smolensk Governorate, founded the Orthodox mission in Japan. By his labors and prayers, the inhabitants of the Land of the Rising Sun learned about Christ and heard the evangelical word. In order to preach in the native language of the local people, St. Nicholas learned Japanese. He also looked after a plot of land on which he decided to build an Orthodox church. This was in the late nineteenth century. The design for the church was conceived by architect Mikhail Arephievich Schurupov, and the work on the site was supervised by Nagasato Taisuke.

Built in the Russian-Byzantine style, the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ is a regularly-shaped cross with narrow wings. It's designed for 2,000 people. Some of the cathedral icons are copies of the works of Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Nesterov.

And so, for already a century and a half now, the Word of God, the news of the Savior come into the world, has been sounding forth under the arches of the church. Probably the first thing that distinguishes the cathedral from the Orthodox churches erected in Russia is the chairs you can sit on during the Divine services. But I should say that people rarely take advantage of this possibility.

The overwhelming majority of the parishioners are Japanese who have come to believe in Christ and have received Holy Baptism. There's a large group of parishioners of mixed families, where the wife is Russian or Ukrainian and the husband Japanese. Foreigners also come in, but they speak Japanese, because the services are in Japanese. Only a few litanies are read in English or [Church Slavonic](#).

Usually, tourists or pilgrims from Russia or other countries of the former Soviet Union who want to hear the Church Slavonic language more familiar to them go to Liturgy at St. Alexander Nevsky Church, the representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, or they go to the Romanian representation church.



The primate of the autonomous Japanese Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Daniel of Tokyo and All Japan (Nusiro Ikuo) serves in the cathedral, with four priests helping him. They're all Japanese and all graduates of the seminary that was opened by the efforts of St. Nicholas and which has never closed.

Metropolitan Daniel, by the way, also graduated from this seminary, and then went to New York, to St. Vladimir's Seminary, where he received a Master's degree in theology.

“Enrollment in the seminary changes every year. Sometimes several dozens of future priests are studying, and sometimes just a few people. And sometimes there are none,” says George Troitsky, a subdeacon at the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ.

He came to Japan more than a quarter of a century ago, having gotten a degree at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Moscow State University. Then he studied in a Japanese university—he was in the country for an internship—and now Japan is his second home. During the day he has his main job, and in the evening and on weekends he helps in the cathedral. He's the only cleric who knows Russian. Among the deacons there are Greeks and Romanians who understand much, but they speak either their native language or Japanese. By the way, many of the priests are fluent in and serve the Liturgy in English, having studied at the seminary in New York where Metropolitan Daniel studied.



In the practice of some foreign Churches, a priest often has to earn a living, mastering some kind of secular profession. That is, he serves on weekends and feasts, but on weekdays he works, for example, as a mailman or a chef. The Orthodox Church of Japan has no such practice. Priests are supported by their parishes.

As a parishioner of a particular church, a person pays regular dues. They can be quite small, but the church lives at the expense of these donations, and not so much at the expense of special services and the sale of candles and other things, as in Russia. When someone is put on the books at a particular parish, he necessarily participates in its life. He's invited to parish meetings. He becomes a member of a family. The journals of St. Nicholas of Japan describe

such parishioner committees, elders with great experience, who help priests in some organizational matters.

This practice also existed in the Russian Orthodox Church before the revolution, but it hasn't been preserved nearly anywhere in its pure form.

But in general, the life of a parish is very similar to that of a church in, for example, Vladimir or Murmansk. There's a Sunday School for children, run by the parishioners themselves. After the Sunday Liturgy, there's always a common meal with a discussion about parish plans, a review of events they held, and congratulations to those celebrating birthdays or name's days. For those who are planning to be baptized, the priests hold catechetical talks.

And, by the way, they run into one national peculiarity.



“The Japanese have a very different idea of faith, of religion,” says Subdeacon George Troitsky. “Traditionally, they profess Shintoism, Buddhism. These are ritualistic religions. St. Nicholas wrote much about it in his journals. The very concept of the Orthodox faith with prayer, with communion with God is unusual and incomprehensible for them. It's hard for them to accept that faith is not traditions, not rituals... And the second point: The Japanese are characterized by syncretism in matters of religion. They have no problem with combining different religions. A family could have funerals according to a Buddhist rite, when a child is born it's dedicated to the gods in a temple (they have a ritual for this) according to a Shinto rite, and marriages could be held according to some other religion's rites. It often happens that after getting acquainted with Christianity, a Japanese person comes to believe in Christ as the Savior. At the same time, at home, His holy image could wind up next to a statue of Buddha. Yes, they came to believe, but it became one more religion they respect. Such

integration of Christianity with paganism is unacceptable. But this is more typical of Asian countries than in others.



Of course, this doesn't apply to modern Orthodox Japanese. They very carefully preserve the faith; but for traditionally raised Japanese, it's typical, standard to respect any religion, any gods.

I have to say that respect is synonymous with Japan. If you go there, get ready to say "hello" and "thank you" hundreds of times, and be sure to bow each time. It's customary. Even a newscaster always makes a small bow after saying goodbye. As my American colleague, with whom I worked together at the Olympics, subtly noted, the Japanese are extremely friendly and polite.

Alas, the youth are not very drawn to faith, although we have to admit that such a situation is developing not only in Japan, but all over the world, perhaps.

Young Japanese people, especially girls, have different priorities, different values. We went to a supermarket in central Tokyo and saw a row of young girls who were patiently waiting their turn to get their picture taken with cardboard cutouts of the members of some popular boy band—not with the actual artists, but with their cutouts. They waited a long time and then took hundreds of photos, now kissing, now hugging, now kneeling (!) in front of these cardboard figures.

Orthodox communities hold educational activities; they invite people to talks, but there are many various strange cults and terrible new religions in Japan, and, alas, they manage to attract many people.

The Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Tokyo has been closed to parishioners for a month now. An emergency regime has been introduced for the duration of the Olympics and Paralympics, and all public institutions have temporarily shut down. The Liturgy is celebrated, but without parishioners.

The Japanese are very law-abiding and observant. If they're told to wear masks, they'll wear them outside when it hits 95 to 100°F during the day. And if they're told the churches are closed, it means no one will go. Alas, there are no TV broadcasts, but church websites have instructions for praying at home.

Alas, I didn't get to go to Liturgy in the cathedral and hear the Gospel in Japanese. But I hope in God's help to find myself on the other side of the world again and understand that His power and strength, His love is always with us, wherever we live, in whatever language we praise the Lord.

[Natalia Shatova](#)
Translation by Jesse Dominick
[Sretensky Monastery](#)
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