



St John's Church News No 91: May 2017

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ЦЕРКОВЬ СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО / ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN

His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Church Outside Russia,
Ruling Hierarch of the Diocese of the British Isles and Ireland

A Parish of the East of England Orthodox Church (Charity No: 1081707)

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Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE2T2sYTy8s>

Расписание богослужений / Timetable of Services

Saturday 6 May

5.30 pm: **Vigil / Всенощное бдение**

Sunday 7 May: Sunday of the Paralytic / Неделя о расслабленном

10.00 am: Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 13 May

9.45: DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO ST ALBANS LED BY BISHOP IRENEI

ЕПАРХИАЛЬНОЕ ПАЛОМНИЧЕСТВО В ST ALBANS С ВЛАДЫКОЙ ИРИНЕЕМ

5.30: Vigil with Bp Irenei / Всенощное бдение с Владыкой Иринеем

Sunday 14 May: Sunday of the Samaritan Woman / Неделя о Самаряныне

9.45 Meeting of the Bishop / Встреча с архиереем

10.00 am: Hours and Episcopal Liturgy with tonsure as reader of Timothy Phillips and ordination of Dcn Spasimir to the priesthood, God willing / Часы и архиерейское служение Божественной Литургии. Постриг Тимофея Филиппа во чтецы и рукоположение о. дьякона Спасимира во иереи, если Бог даст,

Saturday 20 May

5.30: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 21 May: Sunday of the Man Born Blind / Неделя о слепом

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная Литургия

Wednesday 24 May

5.30 pm: Vigil for the Ascension/ Всенощное бдение накануне праздника Вознесения Господня

Thursday 25 May: Ascension Day / Вознесение Господне

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная Литургия

Saturday 27 May

5.30: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 28 May: The Holy Fathers of the First Universal Council / Свв. отцов I-ого Вселенского Собора

10.00: Hours and Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Patronal Feast: Saturday 1 July

Престольный праздник: Суббота 1 июля

Church News

Baptisms in April

1 April: Sophia Jevstigneeva

21/4: Daniel Gutu

22 April: Stefan Ionescu

29 April: Maxim Ursu

29 April: Teodora Dabija (No 250)

29 April: Alexander Hmeljov

Lent and Easter

Sunday services during Lent were well attended with 150-200 people in church on average on Sundays. Holy Saturday morning also saw about 100 people. Easter Night Matins was attended by about 500 and there were some 150 communions from two chalices, as is now usual with our two priests, at 2.15 a.m. Our special thanks once more to Sergey and Elena Smantana who brought beautiful flowers for Palm Sunday, Passion Week and Easter.

New Floor Appeal

All our thanks to the kind people who donated money towards the cost of the new floor.
Thank you!

KEEPING THE JOY OF RESURRECTION FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH YEAR

Fr. Andrew Lemeshonok

Source: *St. Elisabeth Convent*

April 18, 2017

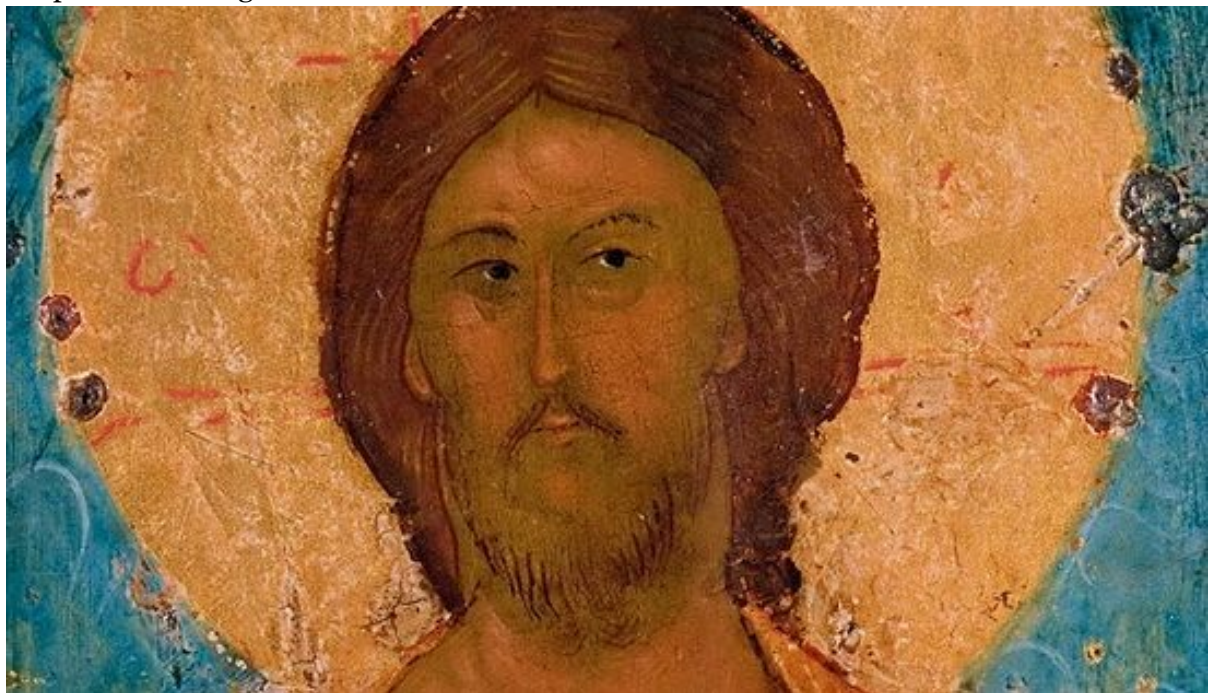


Master, it is good for us to be here (Luke 9:33) – this is what we can say now to our God, Who came to this world to save humanity. Today we are here because it is the very place, where God’s love dwells. The love, which heals any fatal wound, which corrects any mistake and makes up for any loss. There is only one way for an Orthodox Christian – the way to Christ. All the other ways will bring us to a dead end sooner or later. The dead end where we will find nothing but our own “self”, our personal madness and loneliness.

We thank God for allowing us to attend His Feast on this Paschal night. People who have partaken of Holy Communion today will head into the city and carry the Resurrected Christ in themselves. What a wonderful light it will be! Just look how many churches there are in the city, and in each of them people are accepting God.



Sometimes it seems to us that there is so much evil in the world that a person loses the ability to think about what is good and choose good over evil. But this is not true! Christ is the victor! There is nothing to be afraid of, if we choose to be with God. There were some periods in our history when the government itself intended to destroy the Holy Church, to destroy people's faith in Christ. But Christ was victorious. And today Christ is a victor as well! There are many other temptations in the world – modern civilization, information, various conveniences and comfort, without which our life seems to be impossible. In fact, it is only impossible to live without God, while with Him you can live anywhere, even in prison. Father Nikolai (Guryanov) once told me: “You know, it is good to live in prison as well. People are working there...”



It is good to live in any place, if you live with God. At the same time, you will feel bad anywhere if there is no Christ in your heart. I congratulate you all on partaking of the Sacraments of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ! Let this joy of the Resurrection stay in us throughout the entire Church year. Let us always keep in mind the example of the life of St. Seraphim of Sarov. His life was difficult and sometimes even unbearable. Despite the fact that he faced many challenges on his way, he always met other people with these words: “My dear, Christ is risen!” We should also learn to live in such a way. We should keep the Resurrected Christ in our hearts despite all our sorrows and pains. We should learn to see God in any person. This is what the read victory over death is. Pray God that we manage to become the part of this Victory, to live through it and get enough strength to see The Kingdom of Heaven, which any faithful person strives to reach and not just our grave ahead. Christ is risen!

Fr. Andrew Lemeshonok
St. Elisabeth Convent
21 / 04 / 2017

“DEATH HAS LOST ITS POWER AND AUTHORITY” A Paschal Interview with Met. Onuphry

Metropolitan Onuphry (Berezovsky)

How were simple fishermen able to spread the news of the Resurrected Christ throughout the whole world? Why do we not bury the dead on Pascha? Do we have to fast before Communion during Bright Week? [His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry](#) speaks on these and other issues in this interview.



The core of the faith

—Your Beatitude, every year in the Paschal hymns we hear these words: “The feasts of feasts, holy day of holy days.”¹ What does the feast of Pascha mean for modern man?

—The word “Pascha” comes from the Hebrew “pesach,” which means “passed over.” We are talking about distant Old Testament events, when the angel of the Lord bypassed the Jewish houses, destroying all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, *from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle* (Ex. 12:29). For a Christian this feast has another meaning: the crossing over from death to life, from Earth to Heaven. Our Pascha, Christ, was sacrificed for us (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7). Until the Savior’s coming into the world, death reigned over man as a result of his falling away from the Source of Life...

—But people continue to die today. What changed after the Resurrection of Christ?

—By atoning for our sins on the Cross, the Lord opened the path to the Heavenly Kingdom by His Resurrection. Therefore, the feast of Holy Pascha is the greatest and most joyous for Christians. Life has acquired new meaning, being filled with great hope, but death has lost its power and authority. We have all been called to become participants in this great spiritual victory which our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished. His Resurrection is the core of our faith. *And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins* (1 Cor. 15:17). After the Resurrection of Christ, death in its own sense (as a break between man and God) has lost its absoluteness: It depends on a man’s own choice. He who chooses life with God receives eternal life.

—Why don’t we commemorate the departed in Bright Week?

—Paschal joy cannot be overshadowed by memorial sorrow. We remember the departed in these festal days only in light of the joy of the victory over death, sin, and the devil.

Strength in the gift of the Spirit

—It is well known that Christ resurrected nearly 2,000 years ago. How were simple fishermen, His disciples, able to spread this Good News throughout the whole world?

—This great miracle was foretold already in the Old Testament: *Their sound hath gone forth unto all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps. 18:4). The strength of the apostolic preaching was in the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who filled the hearts and mouths of Christ’s disciples. The early Christian Church was abundantly full of special gifts of the Spirit, which opened people’s hearts, and laid within them the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ and man’s salvation. Also, the strength of apostolic preaching was in the experiential knowledge of that which they preached and taught. Almost all of the apostles testified to the truth of their preaching with a martyric death. They taught us to correctly believe in God.

—And why does faith have special significance in the work of our salvation?

—The apostle Paul says that without faith it’s impossible to please God (cf. Heb. 11:6). Our faith is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Heb. 11:1). It is the highest manifestation of free will. Faith discloses the inner essence of a man, determining his choice between good and evil. Faith teaches us to direct our freedom towards fulfilling the Commandments of God, and not to succumb to the influence of the passions. Sometimes a man can wind up under the influence of undisputable facts which define his faith, as it was, for example, at the apostle Thomas’ meeting with the risen Christ. The Lord Himself then testified to him: *Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed* (Jn. 20:29).

A symbol of new life



Photo: Ukrainian Orthodox Church

—Where does the tradition of blessing Paschal kulichi and eggs come from?

—Bread has always held an important place in human life. Believers reverently referred to it as a gift of God. At the Mystical Supper the Lord gave His disciples His Most Pure Body in the form of bread. After His Ascension into Heaven, the apostles continued to gather at common meals: Bread was placed at the head of the table in commemoration of the fact that He abides, as He promised, in the midst of His disciples (Mt. 18:20). In remembrance of this, on Pascha we bless the artos—bread, which stays in the church throughout Bright Week, by the icon of the Savior, as a sign of the presence of the Lord Himself. Believers traditionally eat blessed bread—Paschal kulich—with reverence and gratitude to God at their home table. Painted eggs are also blessed on Pascha. The egg was perceived in the Church's consciousness as a Paschal symbol of the new life which is opened to us with the Resurrection of Christ. The red color symbolizes the Paschal joy obtained by our Savior's sufferings on the Cross. Understanding the spiritual meaning embedded in these symbols, a Christian should first strive to meet with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself on the path of repentance, humble prayer, and Communion.

—How should we spend Pascha week?

—We must spend Bright Week as Christians, in spiritual joy, not in indulging the flesh and pandering to the passions. Great Lent gives Christians the correct attitude towards life and non-Lenten days, by habituating us to abstention in food and pleasures, and to prayer. It would be unwise, after the end of Lent, to squander the spiritual attitude acquired, giving ourselves over to indulgence and sloth. For a Christian, the end of Lent should not be an occasion for aggravation by the passion of gluttony and losing that which was acquired by spiritual labors during Lent.

Rejoicing in the Resurrection of Christ, a Christian should strive, as much as possible, to go to church daily to the Divine Liturgy.

Rejoicing in the Resurrection of Christ, we must not forget those who are struggling, who suffer, or who have no shelter or food, and who are feeble and sick. Let us not forget that in doing good and helping these people, we render honor to the Lord Jesus Himself (Mt. 25:40).

—Must we fast before Communion during Bright Week?

—No. Fasting is not stipulated in the Church ustav for these days. Those who fasted throughout Great Lent can approach Holy Communion during Bright Week, limited only by abstinence from meat.²

The soul yearns for the Father

—The churches are filled with people at the Paschal services. It gives the impression that many are awakening from their spiritual slumber...

—Our people have already been rooted in the Orthodox faith for more than a thousand years: It has deeply entered into all aspects of our lives. Even the decades of atheistic persecutions were unable to quench the light of the Christian faith in the people's consciousness, customs, and culture. The majority of our compatriots (even if they don't regularly go to church) remain Orthodox Christians in essence, in the depths of their souls. This is evident not just in the blessing of Paschal kulich, but in their reverent attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and to the Church of Christ, and to prayer. Reverence and respect for the most important Orthodox feasts has been preserved in to the people's consciousness: Pascha, the Nativity of Christ, Theophany... The people try to go to church on these days, to pray, and to participate in the services.

—Unfortunately, far from all do this. Some justify themselves saying, "I have God in my soul," so they don't need "mediators in the faith," and so on.

—When people say that they have God in their souls, the question immediately arises: Can Christ God enter into the heart of someone who does not listen to Him? The New Testament says that the Lord calls us to repentance (Mt. 4:17), obedience to the Church (Mt. 18:17), Communion (Jn. 6:53, 54), and life in unity with the Savior (Jn. 15:5). And if someone sins and doesn't even think to confess, how can the Holy Spirit be with him? If someone thinks he has no sins, then he is deeply deceived. Unfortunately, many today do not hesitate to repeat stereotypes imposed from outside. But no matter how they try to silence the voice of their consciences—the voice of God—the soul still yearns for the Heavenly Father. After all, it is Christian by nature.

*Archpriest Vladislav Sofiichuk spoke with [Metropolitan Onuphry \(Berezovsky\)](#)
Translated by Jesse Dominick*

¹ Ode 8 of the Paschal Canon.

² His Beatitude is referring to days of fasting before receiving Communion. He is not saying that the total fast from midnight on the day of Communion is annulled in Bright Week.

**“ONLY BY REMEMBERING OUR MARTYRS CAN WE
BUILD THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH”
Archbishop Mark (Arndt) interviewed by Hieromonk Ignaty
(Shestakov)**

[Archbishop Mark \(Arndt\)](#), [Hieromonk Ignaty \(Shestakov\)](#)

This year, our Church marks the 10th anniversary of an important event: the reunification of its two branches: the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. The Act of Canonical Communion was signed in May, 2007, on the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. This holiday will be a special day for Sretensky Monastery in Moscow: its new Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia will be consecrated.

We spoke to Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany of ROCOR--who had contributed a great deal towards the overcoming of division in the Russian Church--about the experience of the Church over the last decade, about the importance of venerating the New Martyrs, and about the events and processes that made reconciliation possible.

– Vladyka, as someone who was directly involved in the process of reunification of the two parts of the Russian Church—the Moscow Patriarchate and ROCOR—what is your opinion of the events in the ten years since?

– It was necessary, and the right thing to do. We always knew that it was going to happen, and we have not been disabused of this notion to this day. The Russian Church in the diaspora never considered itself separate, an independent organism, but always considered itself a part of the one Russian Church. That is stated on the first page of our Regulations.

That is in fact why we glorified the New Martyrs only in 1981. The calls for their canonization began a long time earlier, but our fathers had their doubts. Metropolitan Anastassy even refused to canonize St John of Kronstadt. Everyone knew that he should be glorified as a saint, but Vladyka Anastassy said “We do not want to do anything that might cause a rift between the two parts of the Russian Church.” Only when it began to dawn on us that the Soviet regime might never end, that nothing would change, that the Church in the USSR could not express its free will, then we gradually began to perform canonizations: first St John of Kronstadt, St Herman of Alaska, Blessed Xenia of St Petersburg, and finally, the Holy New Martyrs.

– And the Royal Martyrs?

– All of them. The entire host of New Martyrs. The Royal Family with them, not separately, but at the top of the list.

The hesitancy demonstrates that we never wished to be separated. People would ask us: why don't you just elect your own patriarch? Or: Why do you serve in Church Slavonic, or in German, or French, but not in Russian? But we did not wish to introduce any novelties. Possibly it was some sort of sense of self-preservation—it was important for us to preserve tradition. We avoided doing anything that might divide us. And thank God, we did not suffer anything like the Obnovlentsy movement [Renovationists--transl.], having uncanonical, twice-married clergymen, etc., which for us was out of the question.

It was important for us to carefully preserve tradition. We tried not to take any steps that would lead to a rift in the Church.

We always strove towards unity within the Russian Church. Reunification could have happened earlier, as early as the beginning of the 1990's. But had we been ready to do so in 1991-1992, we would have had to hold talks with Denysenko [excommunicated former Metropolitan Filaret-transl.], and no one else. He was then in charge of matters abroad. But the Lord prevented this from happening. We all knew who he was, and that we could not sit at the negotiating table with him. A cleansing process was required first, which would allow us to start with a clean slate.

When the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate glorified the New Martyrs in the year 2000, this opened the door. Of course, it was difficult at the time, and some problems still linger, for instance, we have two “Archbishops of Berlin and Germany.” But as a whole, our two dioceses, which cover the same territory, are growing together. Gradually, but surely. There are different approaches to life's problems, people sense this, but these are not unusual. One diocese is different from the other, so it always was. The differences are partly in the way we conduct divine services, and everyday differences that we inherited from our forefathers. We are much more conservative in the Church Abroad than in Russia. A community that exists in foreign surroundings more zealously guards its character and traditions, meanwhile, those who live in their homeland allow things to develop and change organically. We are more vulnerable abroad, we are on the edge of our civilization, we try harder to preserve untouched that which we inherited.

Long before reunification, we had constructive meetings and discussions. Some clergymen from Russia began to participate in our events, our clergymen met with clerics from Russia, and we began to understand each other better, to see that things look different up close than they do from afar. I was always amazed how Russian people living abroad loved Russia: despite the divisions and borders, Russia was always first and foremost on their minds. So separating from the Russian Church, from the traditions of our fathers, was out of the question.

Then a certain species of zealot arose; mostly from the new converts, especially in America, who said “No, no, we’re the only ones who are right, there is no truth left over there, in Russia.” They rejected everything about the Moscow Patriarchate. They only noticed the negative, they only spoke about ecumenism. Here, I think, is where many of us got the message and knew that we had to act. God forbid that we suffer total rejection—such a wound would never be healed. It is rare that a schism heals in the Church. Our separation was only administrative, there was no schism, there were not even any hints of it, but the risk remained, and it stemmed from people who had no bonds with Russia, who did not feel the love for her that our old emigres preserved.

– If we examine the process of unification itself not from a canonical and historical viewpoint but from a spiritual one: in your opinion, what was the most difficult thing to overcome for people who personally participated in all this, who bore the responsibility for it? What did you learn from the experience? Maybe you came to new realizations of some kind?

– We feel that there is a serious difference between clergymen and faithful on either side of the Russian border, which is natural, because we traveled separate paths and our experiences differed. But experience can’t always be passed down. I sometimes meet young people who don’t know the meaning of simple Church terminology. Naturally, we can’t expect others to absorb our own experiences, having come from different circumstances.

Earlier, as we were establishing ourselves in local émigré life, it was very hard; the Moscow Patriarchate actively participated in ecumenical gatherings, which was unthinkable for us. Later, it became more understandable and easier to accept, though even now there is a great deal we don’t comprehend.

There are no other Orthodox Christians in my own family but me. You in Russia live among many people who are nominally, or at least potentially, Orthodox, but we don’t. This creates a foundation upon which our lives are built. Our attitude towards ecumenism is harshly negative, because we live among heterodox and heretics. Or, take for example Holy Communion: in the West, in the Russian diaspora, the tradition of partaking of the Holy Gifts on a frequent basis arose earlier than in the new Russia. The Moscow Patriarchate has preserved for many long years, and even to some extent today, the tradition of infrequent Communion from the 19th century. Those of us who live outside of Russia were more sensitive to what was happening in the West, we saw how Catholicism and Protestantism are in decay, and we don’t want to suffer the same thing.

There are many difference between us. What for us is very unusual, for instance, is that there is a great deal of centralization in Russia. Russians are more accepting of this than other nations. We are all free thinkers of a kind. Each diocese has its own identity, its own character, independence, we have a strong sense that we have no central headquarters. It is unheard of for some metropolitan bishop to come to my diocese and start giving orders without my consent. This freedom grants a degree of originality, a creative attitude. We don’t wait for someone in Moscow to issue a directive, we decide things for ourselves.

– And yet, is Church life in contemporary, post-Soviet Russia of any use to you in the Church Abroad?

– Without a doubt. First of all, the very reason I am here now, in Moscow, is for a meeting of the Inter-Council Presence: This was a proposal made by the Church Abroad in fact, and it was accepted. This is important! This is a sign of our sobornost’ [ecclesiastical collegiality-transl.]. This is a vivid example of how the Church can develop in relative independence. I think that all independence is relative. Of course, we are bound by our habits and our traditions, but the Church becomes strong when current events of Church life are discussed on a broad scale—not only within the framework of a Council or Synod of Bishops, but they are taken out for deliberation by a wider circle of people. For us, at least in this form, such a forum would have been impossible—we live too far away from each other. But we always had a closer connection between bishops and the laity. Here in Russia I often see bishops living in virtual isolation. For us it is normal for a bishop to visit a remote parish on its feast day, to have lunch with the parishioners, talk to them about church life, what he is currently working on, he answers questions—this is a real, invigorating exchange of ideas. And this

applies to all parishes that have their own church, and some kind of gathering place after services, where parishioners meet and talk after Liturgy.

We have a very foggy concept of how parish life operates in Russia, and what the people themselves are like. We were reared by those Russians who fled Russia, the descendants of Russian emigres, who were utterly different than the Russians of today—they even spoke differently. It is important for us to take note of how new parishes have been founded over the last twenty-odd years, not only the construction of churches, but the establishment of parishes, that is, as living organisms, where genuine interpersonal communication takes place. These efforts do not always succeed, but there are interesting examples, representing a healthy trend that affects our life in general.

– The Church Abroad canonized the Holy New Martyrs before we did, and started to paint icons representing them. Vladyka, what is your opinion of how the New Martyrs are venerated in today's Russia? Did you expect to see such veneration?

– I expected it. I understood even before the early 1990's that the people of Russia already revered the New Martyrs. We hesitated to canonize them for a long time, but we gradually began to receive communications and even direct requests from Russia, and on that basis we glorified them. That is why the veneration of the New Martyrs in Russia doesn't surprise me. It may not be spreading as quickly as it did in our church. We relied on documents we were able to find; and the most fundamental source was the Soviet press, where the prosecution and punishment of clergymen was widely reported on. We knew little of the two servants of the Royal Family, whether they were even Orthodox Christians or not (one woman definitely wasn't, there are doubts about the other). Here in Russia, each martyr's life is painstakingly studied! Sometimes to the point of absurdity...



We feel that it is enough that a person suffered, demonstrated through the shedding of his blood that he was a Christian.

Our approaches may differ, but it gladdens my heart that at each Council, the importance of venerating the New Martyrs is emphasized, that a great deal is written in Russia about them, books and magazines about them are being published. This is all good, for only by remembering our martyrs can we build the future of the Church.

– We are meeting today in a place where a great many Christians suffered [Sretensky Monastery, former site of a KGB facility-transl.]. What does the existence of a Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in the middle of Moscow mean for you? Is it important for our unified Church?

– I think it serves to unite us. Having a church in such a terrible place, as well as in Butovo Square, where tens of thousands of Christians were martyred, is crucial.

The Lord arranged for a much easier shift from dictatorship to democracy in Russia than in my country of Germany. There it took place in a tragic way after World War II, it was harsh and painful (yet thank God that it did happen!), while here it is happening very gradually. In fact, you still live among people who participated in these executions, who were persecutors of the Church. This has not died out even on a symbolic level: the corpse of the main executioner still lies in a mausoleum in Red Square.

That is why this symbolism is so necessary. In order to conquer this filth, we need to move it away from the people. We often raise this question at the Council of Bishops and hear the following arguments in response: “Yes, but we have to be careful, we need to remember that many people are still alive... Is this really necessary?” This is an important question.

I am grateful to God that in Germany, decisive measures were taken to deal with the past. Maybe it is easy for me to be thankful, because my family was not involved with that specific evil. But I saw how tragic it can be when this surgical operation is not conducted in time-Yugoslavia, for instance. I knew Yugoslavia like the back of my hand, it was always dear to me, I often traveled there, it was the only socialist country to which I could travel. And everything that happened there: the wars, the collapse of the nation, was a result of the fact that during Tito’s reign one could not speak the truth about World War II, it was suppressed, all conflicts were masked over, but then the past came out in the open with tragic consequences. Everything must be done in its proper time.

For our parishioners, it is very important to be able to come here, to venerate the holy sites-we had dreamt about it for so long... In fact, we couldn’t even bear to hope. I was educated by the Lives of the Kievo-Pechersk Fathers, but I couldn’t even imagine visiting Kiev. When I found myself in Novgorod for the first time, and was able to enter the Church of St Sofia, to venerate the relics of St Nikita of Novgorod, I was brought to tears.

My acquaintance with monks from Russia took place in Mt Athos: then, in the 1960’s, the very first monks from [Soviet] Russia arrived, and these served as the first seeds of our future rapprochement. It was important-many emigres simply did not know what was happening in Russia. Unfortunately, this is especially the case in South America, which almost completely went into schism after the reunification. There are very few parishes there, many clergymen still entertain the notion of things as they were 40 years ago, they don’t know what happened here, what is happening now, and they led their flock into schism. When a priest goes into schism, where are his parishioners to go? Especially when there isn’t another church within 50 kilometers... This is a terrible thing. That is our greatest pain-the people we lost to schism.

– Have there been cases when people at first rejected reconciliation, and then came to understand that they were wrong?

– Yes, thank God.

– What is it that influences the attitude of such people?

– They change their views, probably because they see that we were not “swallowed whole” by the “Soviet regime” or the Moscow Patriarchate. They used to say: They will come, seize everything, change everything around and establish their own way of doing things. But no, thank God, we coexist in peace.

Archbishop Mark (Arndt) interviewed by Hieromonk Ignaty (Shestakov)
Pravoslavie.ru

“THE TRAGEDY OF A HUNDRED YEARS AGO CANNOT BE REPEATED”

Archpriest Andrei Sommer

On May 10-11, 2017, the 9th International Student Scholarly-Theological Conference will take place in St Petersburg, Russia, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the labors of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and the convening of the Pomestny [Local] Church Council of Russia of 1917-1918. At the conference, undergraduate and graduate students of higher educational institutions of Russia, the “near” and “distant” diaspora will share their academic work, establish acquaintances and plan joint projects.

Eleven young singers from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia will participate, and also visit the holy sites of Russia’s northern capital.

The historic events of a century ago, the tenth anniversary of the unified Russian Orthodox Church, what role the examination of historic events and the strengthening of mutual bonds that young people play in the diaspora were the topics of a discussion with Archpriest Andrei Sommer, Vice President of the Synodal Youth Department of ROCOR.



Archpriest Andrei Sommer

—Why did the Revolution in Russia occur? How could such a great nation collapse? Why did several million Russian people flee their Fatherland in a bewildering and difficult time into oblivion?

—Almost every Russian person has pondered these questions, both in Russia and abroad, for the last 80 years. Archives and historians give conflicting accounts and interpretations. The last eyewitnesses of those events who found themselves outside of their homeland have already passed to the next world. Their children and grandchildren remain, who don’t know as much about those events.

Historians of the Soviet era have conducted a great deal of research, but there were things that no one paid much attention to during Soviet times. Among them were the psychology

and world view of the revolutionaries. These people, often having been believers in God at one time, became cruel, possessed with the notion of revolution, and ready to sacrifice not only their own lives for the idea, but the lives of others.

Orthodox Christianity teaches that a person finds happiness and meaning only in God. Such a life has a positive effect on a person, his family and in fact the state he lives in. But this ideal can be replaced with the notion of service to another god, in this case, revolution. Devoting one's life to revolution might at first bring a degree of satisfaction, but in the end delivers sorrow and tragedy both to the revolutionary and to his family and entire nation.



Inscriptions on the placards – 'In the struggle you will attain your right, 'Down with monarchy. Long live the Republic'

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill called the 1917 Revolution “a great crime.” At the foundation of the October Revolution lay the abandonment of spiritual values by the people. The people lost something extremely valuable: faith in and love for God and neighbor, they ceased caring about the sorrow of their fellow man. The main tragedy of the Russian nation is that, befogged by the idea of revolution, the people permitted the mockery of their faith, they allowed themselves to be divided into warring factions, to set political and social differences as a greater priority than national unity.

It is sad that Church society also became a part of the boiling cauldron of the Revolution: there were priests who rejoiced at the abdication of the Emperor, who accepted the Bolshevik revolt. But the history of the twentieth century includes many examples of self-sacrificing service to Christ. This is the host of Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. Today, this list includes over 1,700 known names.

For many decades, the new generations on both sides of the Soviet border did not sense the pain felt by the Russian Orthodox Church, they were unaware of the divisions in our Church, which their parents and grandparents endured. They are lucky. But we still need to know the reasons for what took place then.

Today we must objectively examine, and make an honest assessment of the history of our homeland over the last 100 years, since 1917. We cannot wait for historians to interpret it for us, to dot the i's and cross the t's.

Over the last 10 years, in the life of the unified Russian Church, we see young people meeting and actively discussing what happened a century ago. While historians may argue about the causes of the terrible events since 1917, we must strive to strengthen faith in God among our young people, so that the tragedy of a century ago is never repeated.

The main lesson our youth must take away from the last century is that one cannot build one's life without God. Only by living according to Christ's commandments will a people flourish and avoid the tribulations and terror of 1917, and the calamities of the following decades. The words of Bishop Nektary (Kontsevich) of Seattle ring true: "The main goal is to teach our young people to love God."

—Why did you select St Petersburg as the destination for this anniversary?

—St Petersburg is the most beautiful city in Europe, the largest Christian center of Russia; a city which played a leading role in Russian history.

St Petersburg is where the Revolution began, and our youth can see with their own eyes its historical monuments, which includes all of central St Petersburg and its outskirts, and sense the historical atmosphere. We will visit the places where the Royal Family lived, the churches in which they prayed.

I've been to St Petersburg more than once, and can bear witness to the fact that its people, including the local youth, are renowned for their hospitality. The Synodal Youth Department and St Vladimir Youth Association has developed close ties with the youth of the St Petersburg Diocese, headed by Protopriest Konstantin Golovatsky. So the trip our youth choir will take should be very fruitful: our singers can make friends with their counterparts in St Petersburg, get to know each other better, they can pray together, discuss events from history, learn more about Russia's past, and the young people of St Petersburg can learn about life abroad. All this should help strengthen their love for God, for their historic homeland and for each other.

—Over the last 10 years, since the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion, how has our understanding of history changed, and the relationship between youth in Russian and Abroad? What can help in this regard?

—"The duty of the Russian diaspora was to preserve and pass on our spiritual values," said Metropolitan Anastassy, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad at the 2nd All-Diaspora Church Council in 1938. These words are very true. Assisting in strengthening our mutual understanding are joint projects, which since reconciliation in 2007 have multiplied in number. Over 1,000 young people have participated in joint pilgrimages, conferences, symposia, organized by our Synodal Youth Department and various organizations in Russia over the last 10 years.

This time our male choir, under the direction of Adrian Fekula, will sing Sunday Liturgy at St Alexander Nevsky Lavra before the relics of Holy Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth during the 9th Theological Conference, which is dedicated to the labors of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia. The choir will also perform at St Petersburg Theological Academy. We will also visit Efimovsky Correctional Facility and Orphanage of Leningrad oblast, where 100 children are educated.

At the present time, our "School Piggy Bank" project is collecting money for this orphanage. This is an expression of love by our children for their counterparts in Russia who are for one reason or another suffering a difficult fate.

I would like to note that this trip is being supported by St Vladimir Youth Association and also by the Fund for Assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.