



Приходскій листокъ

Свято-Вознесенской церкви

въ городъ Сакраменто

Западно-Американская епархія

Русская Православная Церковь Заграницей

№ 415

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Съ Рождествомъ Христовымъ



Таинство странное виждѣ и преславное, небо вертепъ,
престолъ херувимскій дѣвѣ, гасли вмѣстилище
въ нихже возлеже невмѣстимый Христосъ Богъ,
Егоже воспѣвающе, величаемъ (ірмосъ, 9 пѣснь).



РОЖДЕСТВЕНСКОЕ ПОСЛАНИЕ

Первоиерарха

Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей

Преосвященные собратья-архипастыри, всесвятые отцы-сослужители, дорогие братья, сестры и дѣти мои во Христѣ!

Примите мое первое рождественское привѣтствіе какъ Первоиерарха Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей. Для новаго и столь высокаго служенія нуждаюсь въ особой милости Божіей, обновляющей мои скудныя силы. Усердно прошу васъ молиться о томъ, чтобы Господь укрѣпилъ бы меня на достойное служеніе Святой Церкви и людямъ на этомъ новомъ и отвѣтственномъ послушаніи.

Въ эти святые дни привѣтствую всякъ васъ съ великимъ торжествомъ Рождества Христова изъ далекаго Сиднея, кафедральнаго града Австралійско-Новозеландской епархіи. Желая всѣмъ глубокой и неотъемлемый миръ, воспѣтый ангелами надъ градомъ Виѡлеемскимъ въ ту святую ночь, когда «Слово стало плотью» (Іоан. 1, 14).

Съ Рождествомъ Христовымъ приходитъ и новый годъ. Время бѣжить, годъ за годомъ, день за днемъ. Человѣку не открыто, что можетъ посѣтить его въ теченіе года. Но все ко благу человѣка. Если бы человѣкъ заранѣе зналъ о грядущемъ счастьи, онъ могъ бы предаться бездѣйствію; съ другой стороны, и заранѣе знать о предстоящихъ неизбѣжныхъ страданіяхъ было бы слишкомъ тяжело и невыносимо. Поэтому, навѣрное, Господь и скрываетъ отъ нашихъ взоровъ будущія событія и тѣмъ поучаетъ насъ надеждѣ на Его благой Промыслъ, ведущій насъ къ вѣрѣ, смиренію и вѣчному блаженству.

Въ началѣ минувшаго года отошелъ ко Господу нашъ Авва, всѣми любимый Митрополитъ Лавръ, а въ концѣ - благостный Великій Господинъ и Отецъ нашъ Святѣйшій Патріархъ Московскій и всея Руси Алексій. Оба войдутъ въ исторію какъ объединители, уврачевавшіе раздѣленія церковныя въ Русской Помѣстной Церкви. Какъ извѣстно, раздѣлять легко, для этого не нужно особыхъ усилій, а объединять и примирять падшихъ людей требуетъ терпѣнія, колоссальныхъ внутреннихъ силъ, широкаго сердца, великодушія и неограниченную вѣру въ милость Божію. Возлюбленные мои, будемъ чтить ихъ память не только усердной молитвой, но

и активнымъ слѣдованіемъ ихъ примѣру служенія Богу и людямъ.

Въ связи съ кончиной Святѣйшаго Патріарха Алексія, «ради назрѣвшихъ церковныхъ нуждъ» (Антиох. Соб. Пр. 20), въ Москвѣ созывается Помѣстный Соборъ Русской Православной Церкви. Въ избраніи новаго Святѣйшаго Патріарха впервые примутъ участіе делегаты отъ Русской Зарубежной Церкви. Поэтому, призываю делегатовъ къ благоговѣйному и отвѣтственному отношенію къ своему избранію, вѣдь Самъ Христосъ, Глава Церкви, зоветъ cadaго изъ васъ къ участію въ этихъ соборныхъ дѣяніяхъ.

Прошу всѣхъ молитвенно обращаться къ Господу съ горячей молитвой о томъ, чтобы на предстоящемъ Церковномъ Соборѣ совершилась Его спасительная воля, всегда премудро направляющая ко благу. Пусть участники Собора будутъ живой силой, способной внести радость объ избраніи новаго «великаго господина и отца» въ сердца всѣхъ чадъ Русской Православной Церкви.

Еще разъ поздравляю всѣхъ со спасительнымъ и радостнымъ праздникомъ Рождества во плоти Господа нашего Іисуса Христа, Новолѣтія и приближающагося Крещенія Господня. Желая вамъ свѣтло, благочестиво и радостно встрѣтить и провести эти святые дни. Пусть сердце cadaго изъ насъ станетъ вертепомъ, въ которомъ воссияетъ Богомладенецъ Христосъ, чтобы въ нашихъ глазахъ, въ нашей жизни люди видѣли свѣтъ Виѡлеемской Звѣзды, это сіяніе надежды для всего человѣчества.

Вѣрю, что такая встрѣча праздника станетъ наилучшей проповѣдью Православія среди окружающихъ насъ людей, не приобщившихся еще къ Святой Церкви. Въ такомъ свѣтломъ состояніи, надѣюсь, мы и приступимъ къ дѣяніямъ Помѣстнаго Собора. Аминь.

+ ИЛАРИОНЪ,
Митрополитъ Восточно-Американскій
и Нью-Йоркскій,
Первоиерархъ Русской Зарубежной Церкви.
Рождество Христово 2008/2009 г.

РОЖДЕСТВО ХРИСТОВО ВЪ ЕВАНГЕЛИИ И ВЪ ИСТОРИИ

И Слово стало плотію, и обитало съ нами, полное благодати и истины (Ин 1:14).

Болѣе двухъ тысячъ лѣтъ назадъ произошло необычайное событие — вѣвременноый, вѣчный Богъ вошелъ въ человѣческую исторію и перевернулъ ее. На вопросъ — что нового принесъ Христосъ людямъ, святой Иринеѣ Лионскій отвѣчалъ: «Все новое» — *omnem novitatem*. И это дѣйствительно такъ.

Можно было бы перечислить множество вполнѣ осязаемыхъ даровъ Христа людямъ — совершенно иную нравственность и философію личности, государство и право нового типа, великую христіанскую культуру и, наконецъ, науку, возникшую благодаря демифологизаціи окружающаго міра. Мы къ нимъ привыкли, для насъ они временами незамѣтны.

Однако нѣкоторые утверждаютъ, будто бы Христосъ не рождался, поскольку евангельскій рассказъ о Рождествѣ Христовомъ противорѣчитъ историческимъ даннымъ.

Итакъ, существуетъ ли такое противорѣчіе на самомъ дѣлѣ?

Если въ наше время не торгуютъ людьми въ законномъ порядкѣ, провинившихся рабовъ не распинаютъ на крестахъ, не устраиваютъ гладиаторскихъ боевъ и не травятъ преступниковъ львами, а родившихся дѣтей не выбрасываютъ безнаказанно на дорогу, то этимъ мы обязаны Иисусу Христу и Его ученикамъ. Казалось бы, уже само по себѣ такое положеніе дѣлъ должно свидѣтельствовать въ пользу того, что Христосъ — историческая личность, и Его слова и дѣла дѣйствительно вошли въ исторію и измѣнили ее.

Но, къ сожаленію, богатство даровъ не всегда ведетъ къ благодарности и разсудительности. Такъ, сторонники критической школы протестантскаго богослова Баура вообще отказывали евангельскимъ повѣствованіямъ въ исторической достовѣрности, считая, что евангелія были написаны не ранѣе II вѣка. Однако находки древнихъ папирусовъ посрамили гиперкритиковъ: манчестерскій папирусъ библиотеки Джона Рэйланда №457, содержащій фрагменты Евангелія отъ Іоанна, самого поздняго изъ четырехъ, датируется двадцатыми годами I вѣка, то есть копія была создана всего черезъ тридцать лѣтъ послѣ написанія самого Евангелія. Еще болѣе интересное открытіе сдѣлалъ въ 1994 году немецкій папирологъ докторъ Карстенъ Петеръ Тидъ. На основаніи сравненія съ греческими рукописями Мертвого моря, онъ установилъ, что Оксфордская рукопись Магдаленъ Колледжъ №18, содержащая фрагменты Евангелія отъ Матѳея, которую традиціонно датировали концомъ II вѣка, на самомъ дѣлѣ можетъ относиться къ шестидесятымъ-семидесятымъ годамъ I вѣка. «Даже при бѣгломъ изученіи рукописей можно понять, что они на цѣлый вѣкъ старше, чѣмъ было принято считать вначалѣ», — сказалъ онъ въ своемъ интервью. Это означаетъ, что мы имѣемъ дѣло съ почти прижизненной рукописью, такъ какъ Евангеліе отъ Матѳея было написано въ сороковые-пятидесятые годы I вѣка. Ни одинъ древній историческій источникъ не засвидѣтельствованъ съ такой степенью достовѣрности.

Когда родился Христосъ?

Событія Рождества Христова также подвергались атакѣ гиперкритиковъ. Повѣствованіе евангелиста Луки школа Баура считала слабымъ и недостовѣрнымъ, хотя дѣйствительно серьезные специалисты уровня сэра Уильяма Рамсея характеризовали св. Луку какъ «первокласснаго историка». Однако противъ рассказа Луки Бауръ выдвигалъ три возраженія:

1. Какой смыслъ былъ въ томъ, чтобы заставлять людей покидать свое мѣсто жительства и идти для переписи? Развѣ не достаточно было бы сборщикамъ прийти на мѣсто и переписать население?

2. Исторія вообще умалчиваетъ о подобной переписи.

3. Квириній правилъ Сиріей какъ минимумъ за десять лѣтъ до подлинной даты Рождества Христова.

Для тѣхъ, кто знаетъ исторію Рима и его отношеніе къ покореннымъ народамъ, первое возраженіе выглядит весьма страннымъ, если не сказать болѣе. Когда Римъ считался съ ихъ покоемъ и удобствомъ? *Vae victis* — «Горе побѣжденнымъ». Достаточно вспомнить контекстъ евангельскихъ заповѣдей изъ Нагорной Проповѣди: Но кто ударитъ тебя въ правую щеку твою, обрати къ нему и другую; и кто захочетъ судиться съ тобою и взять у тебя рубашку, отдай ему и верхнюю одежду; и кто принудитъ тебя идти съ нимъ одно поприще, иди съ нимъ два (Мѳ. 5:39-41). Эти слова, конечно, важно помнить въ любыхъ обстоятельствахъ, но они имѣли и вполнѣ опредѣленный историческій контекстъ: отношеніе иудеевъ къ римлянамъ-оккупантамъ. Вѣдь тѣ, случалось, снимали съ оккупированныхъ послѣднюю рубашку и частенько подвергали побоямъ.

Что касается якобы удобства переписи на мѣстѣ, то для нее потребовался бы огромный штатъ писцовъ и чиновниковъ и значительные переѣзды. Поэтому на самомъ дѣлѣ существовало два типа переписи. Первый — запись человѣка въ томъ мѣстѣ, гдѣ онъ оказался на день переписи. Второй — каждый обязанъ былъ вернуться къ мѣсту своего постоянного проживанія и оставить тамъ до постановки на налоговый учетъ. Именно такой порядокъ и засвидѣтельствованъ въ египетскомъ папирусѣ отъ 104 года по Р. Х., содержащемъ слѣдующее постановленіе римскаго номарха Гая Вибія: «Пришло время для проведенія подомовой переписи, сочтено необходимымъ принудить всѣхъ, кто находится подъ тѣмъ или инымъ предлогомъ за пределами своего мѣста проживанія, вернуться въ свои дома для того, чтобы довести до конца перепись въ соотвѣтствіи съ принятымъ постановленіемъ». Такой же порядокъ мы наблюдаемъ и въ рассказѣ Евангелія отъ Луки: святой Іосифъ былъ изъ рода Давидова, и даже вполнѣ возможно, что прежде своей жизни въ Назаретѣ жилъ въ Виѳлеемѣ, на родинѣ своихъ предковъ.

Второе возраженіе — относительно того, что данная перепись вообще не проводилась — также несущественно. Согласно свидѣтельствамъ папирусовъ, перепись могла проводиться между 9 и 6 годами до нашей эры. А теперь обратимся къ подлинной, а не условной датѣ Рождества Христова. Изъ Евангелія отъ Матѳея мы знаемъ, что Спаситель родился во дни царя Ирода и прожилъ во время его правленія около двухъ лѣтъ, поскольку Иродъ, искавшій Богомладенца, убилъ всѣхъ младенцевъ отъ двухъ лѣтъ и ниже, по времени, которое вывѣдалъ отъ волхвовъ (Мѳ. 2:16). Кромѣ того, поскольку Святое Семейство вынуждено было бѣжать, то еще нѣкоторое время прошло въ Египтѣ, прежде чѣмъ Иродъ умеръ въ 749 году отъ основанія Рима, что точно извѣстно изъ независимыхъ историческихъ источниковъ. Между тѣмъ ученый монахъ Діонисій Малый, делавшій хронологическій расчетъ года рожденія Спасителя въ началѣ VI вѣка, ошибочно опредѣлил годъ Рождества какъ 753 годъ отъ основанія Рима. Слѣдовательно, Иродъ умеръ въ 4-мъ году до нашей даты Рождества Христова и Спаситель долженъ былъ родиться какъ разъ около 6 года до нашей эры, и, въ такомъ случаѣ, его рожденіе какъ разъ приходилось на тотъ же годъ, что и перепись, — какъ и сказано въ Евангеліи.

Наконецъ, третье возраженіе — доводъ относительно того, что Квириній управлялъ Сиріей уже послѣ Рождества Христова — также нуждается въ коррекціи. Въ 1828 году въ Римѣ была найдена надпись, согласно которой Публій Сульпицій Квириній дуумвиръ (высшая административная должность для муниципій и колоній) направилъ армію въ Сирію незадолго до 6 года до Р. Х. (по нашему лѣтоисчисленію). Такимъ образомъ, и здѣсь мы видимъ удивительную точность евангелиста Луки.

Если вернуться къ вопросу о переписи, то, по свидѣтельству

папирусовъ, въ концѣ I — началѣ II вѣка послѣ Р. Х. она происходила каждыя четырнадцать лѣтъ. И, по свидѣтельству Климента Александрийскаго, именно перепись въ годъ Рождества Христова положила начало этой системѣ переписыванія населенія. Раннехристіанскіе и византійскіе богословы и церковные поэты видѣли глубокой символизмъ въ томъ, что Спаситель родился во время правленія Октавіана Августа и, такимъ образомъ, тоже подчинился переписи, какъ и всѣ граждане своей страны.

Неслучайная звѣзда

Подвергался сомнѣнію также и рассказъ относительно прихода волхвовъ и избіенія младенцевъ. Однако ничего невѣроятнаго и неисторичнаго въ немъ нѣтъ. Астрологія въ древности была весьма замѣтнымъ явленіемъ въ жизни общества, а волхвы или маги пришли съ Востока или изъ Парфянскаго царства, возможно — изъ Вавилона, настоящей родины астрологіи.

Существуетъ точка зрѣнія, согласно которой въ 7 году на небѣ какимъ-то значимымъ для наблюдателей образомъ сошлись три звѣзды — планеты Юпитеръ, Сатурнъ и Марсъ. Одна изъ нихъ, въ соотвѣтствіи съ астрологическими представленіями, была «звѣздой Іакова» (то есть Израиля), другая — «царская» звѣзда, третья — «звѣзда» войны и преобразованій. По нимъ волхвы узнали о рожденіи великаго преобразователя міра, Царя Іудейскаго, и пошли въ Іудею.

Преданіе о томъ, что они были царями, извѣстно по крайней мѣрѣ уже со II или III вѣка: Тертуллианъ называетъ ихъ «почти царями» — *fere reges*. Преданіе называетъ ихъ имена: Каспаръ, Валтасаръ, Мельхиоръ. Узнавъ объ ихъ приходѣ, жестокой и подозрительный тиранъ Иродъ рѣшилъ избавиться отъ возможнаго соперника. Вначалѣ онъ узналъ отъ іудейскихъ книжниковъ о мѣстѣ, гдѣ долженъ родиться Мессія. Затѣмъ, призвавъ волхвовъ, послалъ ихъ въ Вифлеемъ, попросивъ ихъ разузнать все о Младенцѣ, якобы для того, чтобы поклониться Ему. Звѣзда, какъ сказано въ Евангеліи, вела волхвовъ до Вифлеема и остановилась надъ домомъ, гдѣ поселилось Святое Семейство. Съ радостью они поклонились Младенцу и Дѣвѣ Маріи и принесли Ему дары: золото — какъ Царю, ладанъ — какъ Богу, и смирну — какъ Человѣку, Который долженъ умереть ради спасенія людей. Получивъ откровеніе не возвращаться къ Ироду, волхвы вернулись къ себѣ на родину и тамъ, по преданію, тоже проповѣдали рожденіе Спасителя. На Западѣ они почитаются какъ «три святыхъ царя», ихъ мощи находятся въ Кельнскомъ соборѣ.

Что же касается избіенія младенцевъ — то, какъ повелъ себя Иродъ, вполне соотвѣтствуетъ его характеру, подозрительному и коварному. По свидѣтельству Іосифа Флавія, за одно подозреніе въ посягательствѣ на свою власть онъ уничтожалъ ближайшихъ родственниковъ, въ томъ числѣ свою любимую жену Маріамну, и вырѣзалъ цѣлыя общины. Тѣмъ болѣе для него не было никакихъ препятствій въ уничтоженіи ничтожныхъ для него младенцевъ въ небольшомъ селеніи Вифлеемъ, если передъ своей смертью онъ приказалъ казнить наиболѣе выдающихся гражданъ громаднаго столичнаго города Өерусалима, сказавъ: «Обо мнѣ плакать не будутъ, такъ пусть плачутъ о нихъ».

Бѣгство Святаго Семейства въ Египетъ — также черта историческая: Египетъ являлся римскимъ императорскимъ доменомъ и въ немъ все-таки существовало нѣкое подобіе законности, Ироду не такъ легко было бы въ немъ убить Младенца. И то, что по смерти Ирода святой Іосифъ не захотѣлъ вернуться въ Іудею, убоявшись сына Ирода, Архелая, также соотвѣтствуетъ историческимъ реалиямъ. Послѣ смерти отца Архелай развязалъ гражданскую войну и убилъ въ Іерусалимѣ три тысячи человѣкъ, заваливъ Храмъ трупамъ. Соотвѣтственно, у насъ есть всѣ основанія довѣрять сообщеніямъ евангелиста Маттея.

Пѣсни праздника

Празднованіе Рождества Христова вошло въ церковную жизнь не сразу. Первоначально оно сливалось съ появившимся

въ III вѣкѣ праздникомъ Богоявленія, или Крещенія Господня (19 января сейчасъ, или 6 января по старому стилю), поскольку такіе отцы Церкви, какъ святой Ефремъ Сиринъ, основываясь на словахъ Евангелія отъ Луки Іисусъ, начиная Свое служеніе, былъ лѣтъ тридцати (Лк 3:23), считали, что дата Рождества Христова совпадаетъ съ днемъ Его Крещенія. Въ Армянской Церкви до сихъ поръ существуетъ единый праздникъ Рождества и Богоявленія.

Впервые Рождество начинаетъ выдѣляться на Западѣ въ серединѣ IV вѣка. Въ древнемъ римскомъ месяцесловѣ, датируемомъ 354 годомъ, подъ 25 декабря мы уже находимъ упоминаніе — «день рожденія Христа». Многіе свѣтскіе историки считаютъ, что появленіе празднованія Рождества въ Римѣ именно 25 декабря (то есть 7 января по новому стилю) было связано съ необходимостью борьбы противъ языческаго празднества «Непобѣдимаго Солнца», приходившегося на этотъ же день. Однако изъ переписки святаго Кирилла Іерусалимскаго съ римскимъ папой Іуліемъ слѣдуетъ, что раздѣленіе праздниковъ Рождества и Богоявленія обусловлено развитіемъ внутрицерковныхъ богослужебныхъ традицій.

Въ завершеніе — нѣсколько словъ о двухъ пѣснопеніяхъ праздника. Тропарь, или основной праздничный гимнъ Рождества, могъ быть созданъ уже въ IV вѣкѣ. Приведемъ его церковно-славянскій текстъ:

Рождество Твое, Христе Боже нашъ,
возсія мірови свѣтъ разума,
въ немъ бо звѣздамъ служащій
звѣздой учахуся
Тебѣ кланятися, Солнцу правды,
и Тебѣ вѣдети съ высоты Востока.
Господи, слава Тебе!

Этотъ гимнъ говоритъ о богопознаніи, пути къ которому могутъ, по промыслу Божию, пролетать вездѣ — въ томъ числѣ и черезъ внѣшнее, мірское знаніе, какъ это произошло съ волхвами. А именованіе Христа «Солнцемъ правды» указываетъ на Христа какъ на Источникъ жизни и свѣта — съ одной стороны, чистоты и праведности — съ другой.

Слѣдующій за тропаремъ кондакъ «Дѣва днесъ Пресущественнаго раждаетъ» былъ написанъ святымъ Романомъ Сладкопѣвцемъ въ 10-е или 20-е годы VI вѣка. Какъ гласитъ преданіе, святой Романъ въ юности не имѣлъ музыкальнаго слуха и пѣвческаго голоса и подвергался насмѣшкамъ своихъ собратій по церковному хору. Однажды во время рождественскаго богослуженія онъ обратился къ Пресвятой Богородицѣ со слѣзами и молитвой о дарованіи ему способностей къ пѣнію. Послѣ молитвы онъ задремалъ. Во снѣ ему явилась Дѣва Марія и повелела ему съестъ свитокъ, который Она держала въ рукѣ. Проснувшись, святой Романъ неожиданно для всѣхъ вышелъ на середину храма и сталъ вдохновенно пѣть сочиненный имъ кондакъ «Дѣва днесъ», который и до сихъ поръ считается одной изъ вершинъ церковной поэзіи:

Дева днесъ Пресущественнаго раждаетъ,
и земля вертепъ Неприступному приноситъ;
Ангели съ пастырьми славословятъ,
волсви же со звѣздой путешествуютъ,
насъ бо ради родися Отроча младо,
превѣчный Богъ.

Парадоксальное соединеніе земнаго и небеснаго, матеріальнаго и сверхсущностнаго, человѣческаго и божественнаго — вотъ сама суть христіанства. Невидимый и непостижимый Богъ воплотился и сталъ Человѣкомъ — вотъ, что значить день Его рожденія, праздновать который мы имѣемъ полное право.

Авторъ: діаконъ Владиміръ ВАСИЛИКЪ

ПАТРІАРХЪ – МИРОТВОРЕЦЪ

Архієпископъ Санъ-Францискій и Западно-Американскій Кирилль

«Блаженны миротворцы, яко тѣ Сынове Божіи нарекутся!» Какое огромное значеніе для всего Божественнаго Мірозданія отвелъ нашъ Спаситель, Господь Иисусъ Христосъ, миротворцамъ и миротворчеству, подчеркнувъ въ нагорной проповѣди, что ихъ подвигъ приравниваетъ ихъ къ Самому Ему, тѣмъ самымъ исполняя обѣщанное всѣмъ христіанамъ въ Евангеліи отъ Святого Евангелиста Іоанна Богослова, ибо читается оно въ саму Пасхальную ночь: «дано будетъ сынами Божіими стать» черезъ Иисуса Христа.

Господь Бог призвалъ къ Себѣ отъ насъ въ этомъ году двухъ великихъ Миротворцевъ Русской Церкви: приснопамятнаго митрополита Лавра, и – сегодня – Святѣйшаго Патріарха Московскаго и Всея Руси – т.е. всего русскаго православнаго міра – Великаго Господина и Отца нашего, Алексія Второго.

Для всѣхъ насъ, неожиданно осиротѣвшихъ, вѣрныхъ чадъ Церкви Христовой, отъ архіереевъ и до младенцевъ, кончина Святѣйшаго Патріарха является ошеломляющей утратой въ преддверіи празднованія Свѣтлаго Христова Рождества.

Но мы не можемъ, несмотря на боль отъ неожиданнаго и оглушительнаго удара скорби, содроганія сердца отъ всеобъемлющаго резонанса для всего русскаго общества отъ этой утраты, не обратить вниманія, съ молитвеннымъ трепетомъ передъ непостижимымъ Промысломъ Божіимъ, на умиленные и удивительныя совпаденія, даже нѣкоторую, говоря современнымъ языкомъ, симметричность этихъ кончинъ.

Митрополита Лавра Господь призвалъ безболезненно, въ одно мгновеніе, когда онъ, помолясь, въ канунъ Торжества Православія, отметивъ въ ту субботу день памяти явленія Державной Иконы Матери Божіей, уснулъ.

Святѣйшій Патріархъ Московскій Алексій Второй скончался именно такъ же, по истеченіи первой недѣли Рождественскаго поста, помолясь по своему

обыкновенію, успевъ встрѣтить въ послѣдній день своей земной жизни праздникъ Введенія во Храмъ Пресвятой Богородицы – престольнаго праздника великой Оптиной Пустыни, возстановленной при его жизни и благодаря его молитвенному и патріаршему подвигу. Какъ и Владыка Лавръ, его духовный собратъ и другъ и сподвижникъ въ невыразимо великомъ дѣланіи объединенія поруганной диктатурой безбожія Русской Православной Церкви, Святѣйшій Патріархъ помолился, уснулъ...

Какъ и жизнь, такъ и кончина, такимъ образомъ, и Святѣйшаго Патріарха Алексія, и на нѣсколько месяцевъ раньше приснопамятнаго митрополита Лавра, ознаменована особымъ покровительствомъ Пресвятой Богородицы, а также постнымъ, покаяннымъ временемъ года, въ предвкушеніи и въ молитвенно-

сосредоточенномъ ожиданіи двухъ величѣйшихъ для всякаго христіанина праздниковъ: Пасхи Христовой и Рождества Христова.

Такъ и жизнь наша, въ сей прискорбный вѣкъ, особо призываетъ насъ и къ посту, и къ покаянію, и къ молитвенному подвигу.

Тяжко намъ утратить всего лишь около года послѣ судьбоносныхъ событій церковнаго объединенія нашихъ великихъ наставниковъ – и въ особенности конечно, самого Святѣйшаго Патріарха Московскаго.

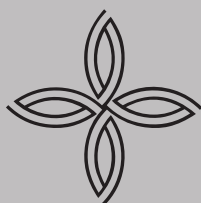
Сегодня, по всей Руси, тысячи храмовъ, монастырей во всѣхъ городахъ и весяхъ, великихъ соборовъ и скромныхъ

приходскихъ церквей, огласилъ траурный колокольный звонъ... Мы, въ зарубежьи, не отдаемъ себѣ даже отчета о томъ, въ какой степени этотъ колокольный звонъ самъ по себѣ является результатомъ упорныхъ, долготѣныхъ трудовъ въ Бозѣ почившаго Патріарха. Кто живетъ за предѣлами Россіи, пусть задумается надъ всѣми событіями восьми – почти – десятилѣтій жизни Святѣйшаго Патріарха Алексія. Онъ выросъ въ



Митрополитъ Лавръ, Патріархъ Алексій и Президентъ В.В. Путинъ въ день подписанія «Акт каноническаго общенія», 17 мая, 2007 года
Metropolitan Laurus, Patriarch Alexei II and President V.V. Putin at the moment of the signing of the "Act of Canonical Communion," May 17, 2007.

40-ой день со дня
кончины:
Панихида по
новопреставленному
Святѣйшему
Патріарху Алексію
Во вторникъ 13-го
января, 5:30 вечера



40th Day Panikhida
For His Holiness
newly-departed
Patriarch Alexei
on Tuesday the 13th of
January, 2009,
at 5:30 pm.

семье благочестивыхъ православныхъ эмигрантовъ въ Эстоніи, такимъ образомъ испытавъ всѣ знакомыя намъ лишенія и горечь изгнанія. Посвятивъ всю свою жизнь и душу Богу, онъ посвятилъ себя и Россіи, и борьбу за ея освобожденіе – которое воспринималъ исключительно какъ подвигъ молитвенной духовной борьбы – и борьбу за восстановление Православія въ полнотѣ своей. Знаменательно и то, что незадолго до своей кончины, Святѣйшій Патріархъ въ Константинополѣ своимъ авторитетомъ призвалъ весь каноническій православный міръ къ усилению дѣятельности за единство, полноту и чистоту Церкви.

Въ преклонномъ уже возрастѣ, Святѣйшій Патріархъ сталъ свидѣтелемъ и трагическихъ событій, такихъ какъ Бесланская и Цхинвальская трагедіи. И въ каждомъ случаѣ нашъ Патріархъ призывалъ всѣхъ къ молитвѣ, къ состраданію и подлинно христіанскому, благоговѣйному, внимательному духовному подвигу, укрѣпляющему вѣковья цѣнности нашей Православной святоотеческой Руси.

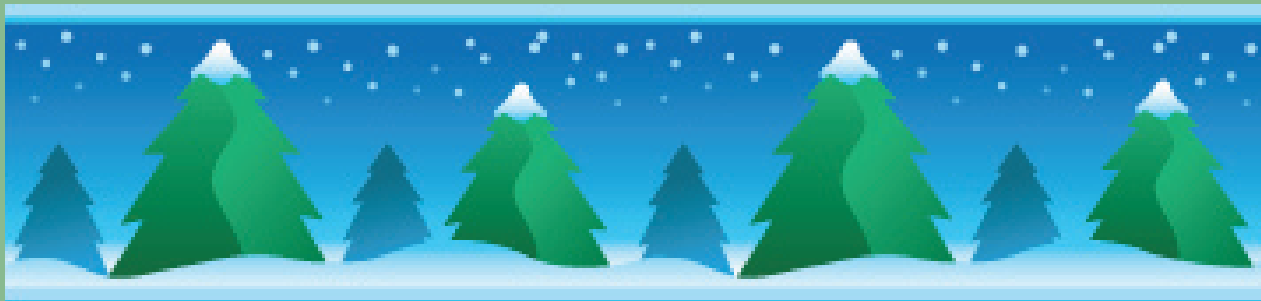
Если намъ удалось избѣжать еще большихъ горестей, то это во многомъ его достиженіе.

То, что у насъ православная власть у руля въ Россіи, что мы признательны новому Правительству Свободной Россіи, за ихъ мужество и разумныя дѣйствія, за поддержку Церкви – всецѣло заслуга Святѣйшаго Патріарха.

Въ эти дни, когда много будетъ сказано необходимаго и примѣчательнаго въ память Святѣйшаго Патріарха Алексія Второго, главное на чѣмъ намъ болѣе всего хотѣлось бы сосредоточить свое вниманіе, это слѣдующее: все мы должны, какъ никогда, молитвенно объединиться съ просьбой ко Господу Иисусу Христу, къ Царицѣ Небесной, чтобы преемникъ нашего оплакиваемого, въ Бозѣ почившаго, Святѣйшаго Патріарха былъ ему подѣ стать: наслѣдникомъ его духа, его подвига, его молитвеннаго уклада жизни, его любви къ ближнему, его любви къ Россіи и его преданности во всемъ, даже до смерти, Господу Иисусу Христу. Его же и Владыки Лавра молитвами «да низведеть Господинъ Жатвы дѣлателя на жатву Свою.» Аминь.

+КИРИЛЛЪ,
Архіепископъ Санъ-Францискій и Западно-
Американскій,
Секретарь Архіерейскаго Синода.

5 декабря 2008 г.



Рождественская Елка

Въ субботу 10-го января, 2009 года

въ 11:00 утра

въ церковномъ залѣ.

Входные билеты:

Взрослый — 10.00 долларовъ

(въ стоимость входитъ обѣдъ).

Дѣтскій — 10.00 долларовъ

(въ стоимость входятъ обѣдъ и подарокъ).



Christmas Yolka!!!

Saturday January 10th, 2009,
in the church hall
at 11:00 am

Tickets:

Adult's - \$10.00 (includes buffet)

child's -- \$10.00 (includes buffet and gift)

From “The Prologue from Ochrid”

Compiled by St. Nikolai Velemirovic

December 25th

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR
JESUS CHRIST

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4) to save the human race. And when nine months were fulfilled from the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel had appeared to the Most-holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying, Rejoice, thou that art highly favored ... behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son (Luke 1:28, 31), at that time there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the people of the Roman Empire should be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and be registered. That is why the righteous Joseph came with the Most-holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal lineage of David. Since many people descended on this small town for the census, Joseph and Mary were unable to find lodging in any house, and they sought shelter in a cave which shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave-on the night between Saturday and Sunday, on the 25th of December-the Most-holy Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving birth to Him without pain just as He was conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit and not by man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, worshiped Him as God, and laid Him in a manger. Then the righteous Joseph drew near and worshiped Him as the Divine Fruit of the Virgin's womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshiped Him as the Messiah and Savior. The shepherds heard a multitude of God's angels singing: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14). At that time three wise men arrived from the east, led by a wondrous star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They worshiped Him as the King of kings, and offered Him their gifts (Matthew 2). Thus entered the world He Whose coming was foretold by the prophets, and Who was born in the same manner in which it had been prophesied: of a Most-holy Virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no king in Jerusalem of the lineage of Judah, but rather when Herod, a foreigner, was reigning. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind, which could not be performed by His servants. To Him be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

Out of burning love, Thou didst come down from heaven;
From eternal beauty, Thou didst descend into monstrous pain;
From eternal light, Thou didst descend into the thick darkness of evil.
Thou didst extend Thy holy hand to those choked in sin.
Heaven was amazed, the earth quaked.
Welcome, O Christ! O ye peoples, rejoice!

Out of burning love, by which Thou didst create the world,
As a slave Thou didst debase Thyself to loose the enslaved,
To restore the house that Adam destroyed,
To enlighten the darkened, to unloose sinners.
Love that knows not fear or humiliation-
Welcome, O Christ! The Master of Salvation!

Out of burning love, O King of all beauty,
Thou didst leave the radiance of the beautiful Cherubim,
Thou didst descend into the cave of human life,
To despairing men, with a torch and peace.
How to contain Thee?-The earth became frightened.

Welcome, O Christ! Heaven bears Thee up!

The most beautiful Virgin for a long time hoped in Thee.
The earth raises her to Thee, that through her Thou wilt descend
From the lofty throne, from the heavenly city,
To bring health, to release man from sin.
O Holy Virgin, Golden Censer-
To thee be glory and praise, O Mother full of grace!

REFLECTION

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east-the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ's divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east? This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which announced the birth of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-holy Theotokos. They spent nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold. The second was called Caspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented the Japhethites, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the Hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the beauty of the soul of the Most-holy Theotokos:

1. How her soul was radiant and immaculate;
2. How her soul was filled with peace from faith and hope in God;
3. How her soul was filled with the sweet-smelling fragrance of prayer.

HOMILY

on the birth of the Lord, the Son of God

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world
(John 16:28).

The only-begotten Son of God, brethren, begotten in eternity of the Father without a mother, was born in time of a mother without a father. That first begetting is an unfathomable mystery of the Holy Trinity in eternity, and the second is the unfathomable mystery of God's power and love for mankind in time. The greatest mystery in time corresponds to the greatest mystery in eternity. Without entering into this greatest mystery with the small taper of our understanding, let us be content, brethren, with the knowledge that our salvation had its origin not from man or from earth, but from the greatest heights of the divine invisible world. So great is God's mercy, and so great is the dignity of man, that the Son of God Himself came down from eternity

into time, from heaven to earth, from the throne of glory to the shepherd's cave, solely to save mankind, to cleanse men from sin and to return them to Paradise. I came forth from the Father, where I had everything, and am come into the world, which cannot give Me anything. The Lord was born in a cave to show that the whole world is one dark cave, which He alone can illumine. The Lord was born in Bethlehem-and Bethlehem means "the House of Bread"-to show that He is the only Bread of Life worthy of true men.

O Lord Jesus, the Pre-eternal Son of the Living God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, enlighten us and nourish us with Thyself.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

December 26th

THE SYNAXIS OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

On the second day of the Nativity, the Christian Church gives glory and thanksgiving to the Most-holy Theotokos, who gave birth to our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast is called "the Synaxis" because on this day all of the faithful gather to glorify her, the Most-holy Theotokos, and to solemnly and universally celebrate a feast in her honor. In Ohrid, it has been the tradition from ancient times that, on the eve of the second day of Nativity, Vespers has been celebrated only in the Church of the Most-holy Theotokos called the Chieftain [Ēlnica]. All the clergy with the people gather together to glorify the Most-pure Mother of God.

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

The wise men (astrologers) from the East, having worshiped the Lord in Bethlehem, were directed to return to their home another way by command of an angel. Herod, that wicked king, planned to slaughter all the children in Bethlehem, but God saw Herod's intention and sent His angel to Joseph. The angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to take the young Child and His Mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did this. Taking the Divine Child and His Most-holy Mother, he traveled first to Nazareth (Luke 2:39), where he arranged his household matters, and then, taking his son James with them, went off to Egypt (Matthew 2:14). Thus the words of the prophet were fulfilled: Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt (Isaiah 19:1). In old Cairo today, the cave where the holy family lived can be seen. Likewise, in the village of Matara near Cairo, the tree under which the Most-holy Theotokos rested with the Lord Jesus, as well as a miraculous spring of water under this tree, are visible. After having lived for several years in Egypt, the holy family returned to Palestine, again in response to a command of an angel of God. Thus another prophecy was fulfilled: Out of Egypt have I called my Son (Hosea 11:1). Herod was dead and his wicked son Archelaus-a worthy successor of him in evil-sat on his bloodstained throne. Hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Jerusalem, Joseph returned to Galilee, to his town of Nazareth, where he settled in his own home. Herod's second son, Herod the Younger, who was somewhat less evil than his brother Archelaus, then reigned in Galilee.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Synaxis of the Most-holy Theotokos

At the border between night and sunny day,
The dawn is rosy, pink and dewy.
The crimson dawn thou art, O Virgin given by God,
Precursor of the day, rosy and glorious.
Thou didst correct Eve and restore her to Paradise.
Do not withhold thy help from us sinners.
Israel crossed dry-shod over the Red Sea;
A cool spring flowed from the rock in the wilderness;
The bush burned but was not consumed-
As the dawn resembles the crimson eve,
So thou, O Virgin, dost resemble those foreshadowings.
O thou whom the Church calls the Mother of God,
Unknown to sin, not given to sin,

O Most-pure Mother of our Savior,
Because of thy purity thou wast chosen by God,
To bring down the Eternal Creator to earth.
That is why thou hast authority to pray for us,
And we have the joy of hymning and glorifying thee!

REFLECTION

A story of the Divine Christ-child: When the holy family fled before Herod's sword to Egypt, robbers leapt out on the road with the intention of stealing something. The righteous Joseph was leading the donkey, on which were some belongings and on which the Most-holy Theotokos was riding with her Son at her breast. The robbers seized the donkey to lead it away. At that moment, one of the robbers approached the Mother of God to see what she was holding next to her breast. The robber, seeing the Christ-child, was astonished at His unusual beauty and said in his astonishment: "If God were to take upon Himself the flesh of man, He would not be more beautiful than this Child!" This robber then ordered his companions to take nothing from these travelers. Filled with gratitude toward this generous robber, the Most-holy Virgin said to him: "Know that this Child will repay you with a good reward because you protected Him today." Thirty-three years later, this same thief hung on the Cross for his crimes, crucified on the right side of Christ's Cross. His name was Dismas, and the name of the thief on the left side was Gestas. Beholding Christ the Lord innocently crucified, Dismas repented for all the evil of his life. While Gestas reviled the Lord, Dismas defended Him, saying: This man hath done nothing amiss. (Luke 23:41). Dismas, therefore, was the wise thief to whom our Lord said: Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Thus the Lord granted Paradise to him who spared Him in childhood.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the purity of the Most-holy Mother of God:

1. On the immaculate purity of her body: passionless and disciplined by fasting;
2. On the immaculate purity of her heart, in which a sinful desire never dwelt;
3. On the immaculate purity of her mind, in which a sinful thought never dwelt.

HOMILY

on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos

And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord (Luke 1:38).

Here indeed, brethren, is a true handmaid of the Lord! If a handmaid is she who exchanges her will completely for the will of her Lord, then the Most-holy Virgin is the first among all of the Lord's handmaids. If a handmaid is she who, with intent and with complete attention, beholds her Lord, then again the Most-holy Virgin is the first among the handmaids of the Lord. If a handmaid is one who meekly and quietly endures all insults and trials, awaiting only the reward of her Lord, then again and again the Most-holy Virgin is the first and most excellent of all the handmaids of the Lord. She did not care to please the world, but only God; nor did she care to justify herself before the world, but only before God. She herself is obedience; she herself is service; she herself is meekness. The Most-holy Virgin could in truth say to the angel of God: Behold the handmaid of the Lord. The greatest perfection, and the greatest honor that a woman can attain on earth, is to be a handmaid of the Lord. Eve lost this perfection and honor in Paradise without effort, and the Virgin Mary achieved this perfection and this honor outside Paradise with her efforts.

Through the prayers of the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

December 27
REFLECTION

A story of the Divine Christ-child: Both great prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophesied that the Lord would come to Egypt and that His presence would shake the pagan temples and destroy the idols. Isaiah wrote: Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence (Isaiah 19:1, cf. Jeremiah 43:12-13). When the divine refugees came to the city of Hermopolis (Cairo), they approached a pagan temple, and all the idols in that temple suddenly fell down and were shattered. St. Palladius writes of this in his Lausiaca History: "We saw the pagan temple there, in which all the carved idols fell to the ground at the coming of the Savior." In a certain place called Sirin there were 365 idols. When the Most-holy Virgin entered that temple with the Divine Child in her arms, all these idols fell down and were shattered. All the idols throughout Egypt fell in the same manner. The Holy Prophet Jeremiah, living in Egypt in old age, had prophesied to the pagan priests of Egypt that all the idols would fall and all the graven images would be destroyed at the time when a Virgin Mother with a Child, born in a manger, would come to Egypt. The pagan priests remembered well this prophecy. In accordance with it, they carved out a representation of a Virgin as she lay on a bed and, next to her in a manger, her young Child wrapped in swaddling clothes; and they venerated this representation. King Ptolemy asked the pagan priests what this representation meant, and they replied that it was a mystery, foretold by a prophet to their fathers, and that they were awaiting the fulfillment of this mystery. And, indeed, this mystery was fulfilled, and revealed not only in Egypt but also in the entire world.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the wisdom of the Most-holy Virgin Mary:

1. How she spoke wisely with the angel of God (Luke 1:28-38);
2. How she pondered in her heart all that had happened at the birth of the Lord Jesus and all that was said of Him;
3. How, at Cana, she wisely told the servants to do whatever He told them.

HOMILY

on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos

My soul doth magnify the Lord (Luke 1:46).

Brethren, we have in total only a few words spoken by the Most-holy Theotokos recorded in the Gospels. All of her words pertain to the magnification of God. She was silent before men but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and incentive to magnify God. If only we were able to know and to record all her magnifications of God throughout her whole life, oh, how many books would it take! But, even by this one magnification, which she spoke before her kinswoman Elizabeth, the mother of the great Prophet and Forerunner John, every Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and God-pleasing flower was her most holy soul. This is but one wonderful canticle of the soul of the Theotokos, which has come down to us through the Gospel. However, such canticles were without number in the course of the life of the Most-blessed One. Even before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak with God and to glorify Him in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured into her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God with canticles throughout her whole life, and therefore God magnified her above the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Likewise, small and sinful as we are, the same Lord will magnify in His Kingdom us who magnify her, if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our deeds, words, thoughts and prayers.

O Most-holy, Most-pure and Most-blessed Theotokos, cover us with the wings of thy prayers.

To thee and thy Son and our Lord be glory and praise forever.
Amen.

December 28
REFLECTION

A story of the Divine Christ-child: When the Most-holy Virgin, with her Divine Child and the righteous Joseph, drew near to the city of Hermopolis [Cairo], they saw a tree before the gate of the city. The travelers from afar were weary from their journey and approached this tree to rest a while, even though the tree was very tall and did not offer adequate shade. The Egyptians called this tree "Persea" and worshiped it as a god, for they believed that some divinity was hidden in the tree. In reality, an evil spirit dwelt in this tree. As the holy family approached the tree, the tree shook fiercely, and the evil spirit, terrified by the approaching Christ-child, fled. Then the tree bent its top down to the ground and worshiped its Creator like a rational creature. Thus the bent tree cast a great shadow, under which the weary travelers rested. From that day, the tree received miraculous healing powers from Christ the Lord to heal every infirmity of men. Afterward, the holy sojourners went to the village of Matarea. Near the village they saw a fig tree, and, while Joseph went into the village on business, the Most-holy Virgin took refuge under the fig tree with the Lord. And, oh, what a miracle: the tree lowered its crown down to the ground to create a shadow for the travelers, and its lower half split open in such a way that the Mother with the Child could enter and rest. And what is even more miraculous: a living spring of water suddenly opened up near the fig tree. Joseph found a hut in the vicinity, where they settled. There they lived and drank water from that miraculous spring. This was the only spring of living water to be found in Egypt, for all the other water in Egypt comes from the Nile River, which branches off into innumerable canals. And thus, like brought forth like: the Lord Jesus, the Immortal and Heavenly Spring of living water, by His presence called forth this spring of living water from the earth.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the assembly of Christ's holy martyrs:

1. How they endured sufferings and did not deny Christ;
2. How, out of love for Christ the Lord, they went to their sufferings and death as if to a feast;
3. How they now rejoice in the Kingdom of Christ and help us by their prayers.

HOMILY

on the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it (John 2:5).

Here is joy for all the faithful: she who is closest to Christ the Savior in heaven, as she had been on earth, cares for the faithful, appears to them, helps them and advises them, Whatsoever He, my Son and my God, saith unto you, do it. Thus, she advised the servants at the marriage in Cana, and the servants obeyed her and saw a miracle. From those few words of the Most-holy Virgin, God's Bride, recorded in the Gospel, we receive a precious instruction, truly the one and only Gospel instruction that she gave to mankind during her life on earth. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it! As though she wanted to say: "He knows all; He can do all; He loves you all; therefore, you should look neither here nor there, but hear Him and obey Him." She comprehended the responsibility in this world of living for Him and directing others to Him as the Source of life, and she voluntarily continues carrying out this responsibility even from heaven. Throughout the Church's entire history, she has taught the faithful to do whatsoever He said. And even today, from her heavenly glory, she mystically descends among the faithful to counsel them to do that which He has commanded. That is her Gospel—the Gospel of the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos. It consists not of the Four Gospels but of four words: Do whatsoever He saith. O my brethren, let us obey her! Let us obey her as a mother and more than our mother, for she desires the greatest good for us—to reign in the Eternal Kingdom of her Son.

O Most-holy Virgin, help us to fulfill His words.
To Thee and to Him be glory and praise forever. Amen.

THE PATRIARCH WHO BROUGHT PEACE

Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America

“Blessed are they who make peace, for they shall be called the sons of God!” Such was the great importance for all of God’s Creation that Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ conferred upon the persons and role of the Peacemakers, and upon the virtue of Peacemaking, that in His Sermon on the Mount He stressed the significance of this spiritual feat, this podvig, exalting its heroes to a moral stature of kinship and semblance to His Own—a fulfillment of the promise further elaborated for all Christians by Saint John the Theologian, in his Gospel that we read every Paschal night: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12), through Christ.

Over the course of the past year, our Lord has called to His Kingdom two great Peacemakers of the Russian Church: Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, and now—today—His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (in other words, of the entire Russian Orthodox world of our time), our Great Sovereign Lord and Father, Alexy II.

For all of us faithful children of Christ’s holy Church, who find ourselves suddenly bereaved and fatherless, from the hierarchs to the infants, the departure from this earthly realm of our Most Holy Patriarch constitutes a staggering blow and loss, in this time of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the radiant feast of Christ’s Nativity.

Yet, however keenly we might feel the pain of the sudden, jarring, unexpected and grievous impact; even as the heart contracts merely to contemplate the multi-dimensional, all-encompassing implications for all Russian society of this loss; we cannot fail but observe, with prayerful reverence and awe before the unfathomable works of our Provident God, the deeply moving and startling parallels, and even a kind of symmetry, to use a secular term, in the circumstances surrounding the passing away from this mortal vale of both of these great spiritual Fathers of Orthodoxy of our time.

The Lord called away Metropolitan Laurus without pain or suffering, in the blink of an eye, when after the first week of Great Lent, during the night just before the Sunday of Orthodoxy, having spent that final Saturday on earth commemorating the anniversary of the miraculous finding in 1917 of the Sovereign or Reigning Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, having prayed, as was his habit, he peacefully fell asleep and reposed.

His Holiness Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, reposed exactly the same way: at the end of the first week of the Nativity fast, having prayed as was his habit, and having spent his last day on earth celebrating the great feast of the Presentation of

the Mother of God, which is also the principal feast day of the great Optina Monastery and Hermitage, that during his lifetime had been restored very much as a result of his own spiritual efforts, unceasing prayers and Patriarchal leadership. Just as Metropolitan Laurus, his brother in Christ, his spiritual friend, spiritual collaborator and fellow visionary in the inexpressibly important, exalted mission of the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church that a tyranny of militant atheists had shattered and sought to annihilate, His Holiness, our Patriarch, having said his usual monastic prayers as well as the prayers for our Lady’s feast, and for the fast period, for the holy

Advent—having prayer for all of us, and for all of Christendom, and for all of Russia—simply fell asleep.

Thus, the life and especially the passing away into eternity of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II, very much as in the case of Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, just a few months earlier, has been vividly marked by the special protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, as well as by the lenten season of fasting, prayer and repentance, in an intensely focused, conscious prayerful expectation of the two greatest holy days for any Christian: the Feast of our Lord’s Glorious Resurrection, and the Feast of Christ’s Nativity.

And truly our life today, in this troubled age, in this age of sorrows, calls us all indeed to fast in earnest, and to repent in earnest, and to pray with fervor.

It is very hard for us to lose both our great spiritual fathers and teachers so soon, within months of each other, and only about a year after

the decisive, historic events of the reunification of our Church—and in particular, of course, it is especially painful to lose His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow himself, at this time.

More than any other living hierarch, he epitomized the Russian Orthodox Church.

Today, all across Russia, thousands of churches and monasteries, in all the cities and hamlets of that vast land, in great cathedrals as well as unassuming parishes, bells tolled the tocsin, the special lament for the dead. We who live abroad often lack even the capacity to fully comprehend to what an enormous degree even this music of our beloved consecrated church bells that can be heard all over Russia now is itself the direct result of the determined, relentless labours, over a period of decades, of this very selfsame Patriarch, now reposed in the Lord.

Those of us whose lives unfold beyond the borders of Russia should reflect over the complexity of the almost eight decades of life God allotted to His Holiness Patriarch Alexy. He was born and brought up in Estonia by especially pious Russian Orthodox par-



Патріарх Алексій і Митрополитъ Лаврѣ после подписанія «Акть Канонического общенія», 17 мая, 2007 года
Patriarch Alexei & Metropolitan Laurus after the signing the Act of Canonical Communion, May 17, 2007

ents who had fled Communism, and as such he had direct personal experience of all the hardships so familiar to us all, as refugees and emigres. He knew the bitter taste of exile. Body and soul, he chose to surrender his whole life to God—an extremely risky decision given his aristocratic ancestry, the family history and the times. In offering his life to God, he also dedicated it wholly to Russia, and to the struggle for Russia's salvation, meaning her liberation from the yoke of godless usurpers, from persecutions and atrocities against believers. Like those of his brothers in Christ who eventually led the triumph of Christ's flock over Christ's ruthless adversaries, Patriarch Alexy understood that the struggle for the liberation of Russia could only take place as a spiritual struggle on a battlefield of prayer: the struggle to restore true Orthodoxy in its fullness. In that context, it is especially notable that, In Constantinople, shortly before his life here earth would draw to a close, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy through the influence of his authority, experience and charisma, called upon all the faithful of the canonical Orthodox communities of our time to intensify our combined efforts on behalf of the unity, wholeness and purity of Orthodoxy and our Church.

Even after such an eventful lifetime as his had been, it was God's will that His Holiness Patriarch Alexy should be the witness, in advanced years, of such terrible tragedies as the atrocities perpetrated in Beslan and Tskhinval. Both times, as always, our Patriarch called upon everyone to respond to these events with intense prayer, with compassion and genuinely Christian, reverent, conscious spiritual effort, to strengthen the eternal and immutable values of the Orthodox Russia handed down to us by our holy fathers.

That we have been able to avoid perhaps even more calamitous catastrophes may be fairly said to be, to a large extent,

the result of his moral and spiritual leadership, his example, his actions.

That we have today, at the helm of Russia, an Orthodox government, that we can be thankful to the new government of a liberated and free Russia for their courage and wise policies, for their support of the Church, is entirely the result of the efforts of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy.

In these coming days, when much shall be said that is both essential and remarkable in honor of the memory of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II, the main point on which we would like above all to focus our minds is this: now, as never before, we must all unite in prayer with an earnest appeal to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to His Most Pure Mother, our Heavenly Queen, that the successor of our much-lamented Patriarch Alexy, reposed in our Lord this day, should be in every respect his equal: that he should be heir to his spirit, and to his spiritual heroism, to his leadership, to his prayerful life centered as it was on the Divine Liturgy and on constant prayer, to his compassionate love of his neighbour in keeping with Christ's commandment, to his love for Russia, to his devotion in everything, even unto death, to our Lord Jesus Christ. By his prayers and the prayers of our Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory, may "the Lord of the Harvest send forth a labourer into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38). Amen.

+KYRILL

Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America

Secretary of the Synod of the

Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church, Diocese of San Francisco and Western America, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

Address: 714 — 13th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Telephone: (916) 443-2271. FAX (916) 443-5079
Sisterhood: (916) 446-7473.

Website: <http://www.holyascensionchurch.com>

Rector: Rev. Paul Volmensky, home (916) 443-2271 Choir conductor: Elizabeth Volmensky (916) 284-6250
mobile (916) 730-2680 Head Sister: Veronica Klimoff (916) 362-8567

Church Warden: Leonty Naumov (916) 308-1918 Cemetery Treasurer:

The Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox Church
714 -- 13th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814